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ABSTRACT

In January 2000, the Scottish Council for Research in Education began a 2-year evaluation of the Classroom Assistant Initiative, which provided funding for hiring up to 5,000 new classroom assistants in Scottish elementary schools by 2002. The evaluation examined: relationships between student achievement and use of classroom assistants, comparing different models of deployment; whether the initiative enabled better utilization of teacher time; and the effects of the initiative on classroom interaction and students' learning experiences. By September 2001, approximately 4,400 classroom assistants had been hired. Most supported teachers within classes while also doing whole-school administrative and supervisory tasks. Overall, the impact of this initiative was very positive. Teachers and administrators believed that the most important contribution of classroom assistants was their flexibility in supporting both teachers and students. Assistants had an indirect impact on student achievement by allowing teachers to devote more time to teaching. Classroom assistants influenced the way teachers used their time, and classroom practices changed as a result of hiring classroom assistants (e.g., most teachers reported that students spent more time on task, were more motivated, and enjoyed working with the assistants). Five appendixes contain study background, evaluation questions, methodology, annotated questionnaires, and case study schools. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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ED 472 941

The Scottish Council for
Research in Education

# More than 'an extra pair of hands?'

*Valerie Wilson*
*Ursula Schlapp*
*Julia Davidson*

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UNIVERSITY
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# More than 'an extra pair of hands?'

*Valerie Wilson*
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the SCRE Centre
research *in* education

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

In January 2000 the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) began a two-year evaluation of the Classroom Assistant Initiative. The Initiative, supported by the Excellence Fund, provided funding for up to 5000 new classroom assistants' posts in Scottish primary schools by 2002. The evaluation was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department and undertaken with advice from Edinburgh's Telford College, The Scottish Further Education Unit and Edinburgh University.

## Aims

The evaluation had three main aims. These were to:

- explore the association between pupil attainment and the use of classroom assistants' comparing different models of deployment.
- determine whether the Initiative enabled better utilisation of teachers' time.
- document the effects of the Initiative on classroom interaction and the learning experiences of pupils.

## Main findings

By September 2001 approximately 4400 classroom assistants (3900 FTEs) had been appointed. Most authorities reported no shortage of suitable applicants for classroom assistant posts. Successful appointees were usually women aged between 35 and 44 years, who had previously worked in schools as parent helpers, special needs auxiliaries or playground supervisors. Most assistants supported teachers within classes but also undertook whole school administrative and supervisory duties. The majority were satisfied with their jobs, their hours and conditions of work, but approximately half were dissatisfied with the salaries they received. By the end of the evaluation most authorities employed assistants for 25 hours per week for between £5 and £6 per hour. Approximately a quarter of all assistants would like to undertake teacher training in three to five years' time.

## What was the impact of classroom assistants?

### *Overall impact*

Overall the impact made by the Classroom Assistant Initiative has been very positive. Specifically:

- Education authority representatives, headteachers and classroom teachers believe that the most important contribution of classroom assistants is their flexibility in supporting both teachers and pupils. Many also indicate that having an extra adult in the class, and 'freeing up' teachers are important.

- In autumn 2000 most respondents were very satisfied with the Initiative and only three reported any dissatisfaction. By the end of the evaluation, although most remained satisfied, more, mostly teachers, were dissatisfied.
- Teachers' dissatisfaction is particularly associated with frequent interruptions or withdrawals of timetabled classroom assistant support from their classes, insufficient training of classroom assistants and a shift in the classroom assistant's remit from in-class support to administration and supervisory duties.

***On pupil attainment***

In general, classroom assistants have had an indirect impact on pupils' attainment by allowing teachers to devote more of their own time to teaching. With the limited attainment data available to the evaluators it is impossible to define more precisely the contribution classroom assistants made to raising pupils' attainment. The presence of multiple policies aimed at raising attainment was an additional complication. However:

- Most schools and authorities thought that the Classroom Assistant Initiative, along with the Early Intervention Programme, were important factors in helping them to meet or exceed their attainment targets in June 2001.
- By September 2001 respondents were more confident than earlier in the evaluation that improvements in the attainment of some pupils could be attributed to classroom assistants.

***On teachers' utilisation of time***

Classroom assistants have influenced the way teachers use their time. This is largely because:

- Relationships between classroom assistants and teachers were generally perceived to be good from the outset, and these improved over time.
- Most teachers, who worked with classroom assistants, thought that they now had more time to spend on teaching, planning and managing learning. A half reported that the quality of their teaching time improved, but a quarter thought that their own use of time had remained the same as before the Initiative.
- Teachers suggested that classroom assistants enabled them to concentrate on teaching individuals and groups and to expect more from pupils. They also spent less time preparing resources, and on routine tasks such as registration, on handling discipline, and pastoral care.
- Only a minority thought that working with classroom assistants required more time than was gained from the assistant's support.

***On classroom interactions and pupils' learning experiences***

Classroom practices changed as a consequence of the deployment of classroom assistants. In particular:

- The majority of teachers reported that when a classroom assistant was present pupils spent more time on task and experienced more practical activities and interaction with an adult.
- Headteachers, and to a slightly lesser degree teachers, felt that classroom assistants had improved pupils' motivation, and in some cases their behaviour as well.
- Pupils themselves enjoyed working with classroom assistants and appreciated the extra support in the class and elsewhere in school. They clearly distinguished between classroom assistants, whom they saw as 'helpers', and teachers.

The main stakeholders also expressed a number of concerns about the future of the Initiative. Finding time for planning and liaison between teachers and classroom assistants remained problematic throughout. Less than half of the classroom assistant respondents and only a third of teachers believed that they had sufficient time to discuss their work together. Some reported that communication was rushed and lacked depth. Other concerns focused on future funding, further developments (in particular the effects of expanding the Initiative into secondary schools), the availability of training for classroom assistants and teachers, clarification of the remit of classroom assistants, allocation of their time, and the impact of *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* on how classroom assistants are utilised.

Finally, it should be noted that most parent respondents were largely unaware of the role played by classroom assistants. We believe that this is a cause for concern if parents are to become full partners in their children's education.

# 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and research outline

In January 2000 the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) began a two-year evaluation of the Classroom Assistant Initiative. The Initiative, supported by the Excellence Fund, provided funding for up to 5000 new classroom assistant posts in Scottish primary schools by 2002. Although the use of staff to support teachers is not new (see Appendix 1 for further details), this evaluation focuses on the current Initiative. It was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department and undertaken with advice from Edinburgh's Telford College, The Scottish Further Education Unit, and Edinburgh University.

Data were collected in three main phases. First, education authorities' reports of their pilot programmes were analysed to give a national picture of the Initiative at the end of the pilot phase. This analysis was presented in a preliminary report *Classroom Assistants: Lessons from the pilot projects* (Wilson *et al*, 2001).

Next, a national sample of 96 primary schools was surveyed during the autumn term, 2000. This included postal questionnaires to education authority and school staff, and also interviews and observations in six case study schools; its key findings were presented in an interim report *'An Extra Pair of Hands?'* (Schlapp *et al*, 2001). Finally, the surveys and school visits were repeated in 2001.

This final report of the evaluation draws together evidence from all three stages. It outlines participants' perceptions and experiences of the Initiative from its inception in 1999 to the start of the school session 2001/02, and discusses the successes and problems that have been encountered.

## 1.2 Aims of the evaluation

The evaluation had three main aims. These were to:

- explore the association between pupil attainment and the use of classroom assistants comparing different models of deployment
- determine whether the Initiative enabled better utilisation of teachers' time
- document the effects of the Initiative on classroom interaction and the learning experiences of pupils.

A number of secondary aims were also identified, namely to:

- assess any changes in pupil attitudes or behaviour associated with the use of classroom assistants
- determine how classroom assistants operate in the supervision of pupils and the support of learning
- document how classroom assistants are trained and managed
- identify any problems arising from the implementation of the Initiative
- assess any unexpected benefits or disbenefits arising from the Initiative.

## 1.3 Evaluation questions

These aims informed the development of a series of evaluation questions which may conveniently be summarised under three headings:

- Questions relating to the identity of classroom assistants
- Questions relating to the deployment of classroom assistants in schools
- Questions relating to the effects of classroom assistants.

A complete list is provided in Appendix 2.

## 1.4 Research methods

Two main methods of data collection were employed: national surveys of a range of stakeholders in schools and education authorities, and in-depth interviews and observations in a small number of case-study schools. Specifically:

- Ninety-six schools were surveyed in October 2000 and again in September 2001. Questionnaires were completed by education authority representatives, and by headteachers, teachers and classroom assistants in the sample schools. We also surveyed 200 parents of children in the case study schools. (See Table 1.1 below)

*Table 1.1: Survey response rates for 2000 and 2001*

| Respondent group | **2000** Number of replies | Response rate (% of possible replies) | **2001** Number of replies | Response rate (% of possible replies) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Headteachers | 74 | 77 | 74 | 77 |
| Class Teachers | 114 | 58 | 118 | 62 |
| Classroom Assistants | 95 | — | 131 | — |
| Education Authorities | 28 | 88 | 29 | 91 |
| Parents | 56 | — | 104 | — |

- Six case study schools were selected from a variety of education authorities, geographic locations and with pupils from a range of social backgrounds. Their school rolls ranged from 30 to 400 pupils, and they employed classroom assistants for 12.5 to 27.5 hours per week. The case study schools were visited in November 2000 and in May 2001. On each occasion, headteachers or classroom assistant co-ordinators were interviewed and classroom interactions were recorded with the aid of a digital camera. These 'critical events' formed the basis of 'stimulated recall' discussions with teachers, classroom assistants and pupils.

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## 1.5 Structure of the report

This report comprises six main sections of which this introduction is the first.

**Section 1** introduces the study and outlines the aims, questions and methods addressed.

**Section 2** presents information about the numbers of classroom assistants in post, their background and experience, and their perceptions of the job.

**Section 3** describes the management of the Initiative from the education authority perspective, including recruitment, deployment, support and training issues.

**Section 4** outlines how the classroom assistants are managed and supported within schools.

**Section 5** explores the impact of classroom assistants on teachers and pupils. It draws on key findings from the case studies including the views of pupils and parents. It also describes what education authorities and schools think the Initiative is contributing to schools and their satisfaction with, and concerns about, it.

Finally, **Section 6** draws together evidence from the evaluation on the three main areas of interest: the impact of classroom assistants on pupil attainment, teachers' time, and classroom interaction and learning. It also identifies other issues that have arisen during the evaluation and discusses how these might be important for the continuing success of the initiative.

At the end of the report a list of references is given, and a number of appendices provide additional information.

# 2: The classroom assistants

## 2.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the classroom assistants themselves. It provides information about the number in post, their qualifications and experience, their satisfaction and concerns, and future career aspirations.

## 2.2 Numbers of classroom assistants

By September 2001 there were approximately 4400 classroom assistants in post in Scottish schools. Approximately one fifth worked part-time, from one to over 20 hours per week, but the majority were employed full-time for 25 hours or longer per week. This is the equivalent of 3900 full-time equivalent posts (FTEs), a considerable increase over the 2000 FTEs reported in August 2000. By 2001 more than half (57%) of the headteachers in our sample had either been allocated additional classroom assistants or increased the hours worked by part-time assistants since August 2000.

Some headteachers had previously used their schools budgets to fund additional classroom assistant support. By 2001 only 5 of the 74 (7%) resorted to this practice, of which one post was 'for early intervention work, P1 to P3' and the remainder for extending the hours of nationally funded classroom assistants. The extra time was used in various ways, for example to enable classroom assistants to attend courses or to take a music club at lunchtimes. One authority, which at the beginning of the Initiative paid classroom assistants for planning and liaison time outwith the 25 hour working week, changed its policy during the course of the evaluation. All subsequent classroom assistants were funded for 25 hours only, leaving headteachers to fund additional hours from school resources if they chose to.

## 2.3 Who are the classroom assistants?

### *2.3.1 The 2001 sample*

In 2001, 131 classroom assistants from 65 schools in 29 authorities responded to our questionnaires. This represented approximately 3% of the total number of classroom assistants then in schools. Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents were new in post in August 2000; a third (33%) had taken up post in the previous session (August 2000–June 2001), and the remainder had been appointed prior to August 2000.

*Age*

The age profile of classroom assistants responding to the 2001 survey was virtually unchanged from the previous round. Most classroom assistants (60%) were in the 35–44 year age group. The rest were equally divided between older and younger age bands, but only 6% were under 25 years old and 2% were over 55 years old.

### *Gender*

Comparison of the first and second surveys revealed no change in gender balance. Most classroom assistants were female and education authority representatives indicated that few men applied for posts, even where considerable efforts were made to attract them:

> *Despite specific press stories on recruitment we continue to have difficulties in recruiting males.*
>
> (EA)

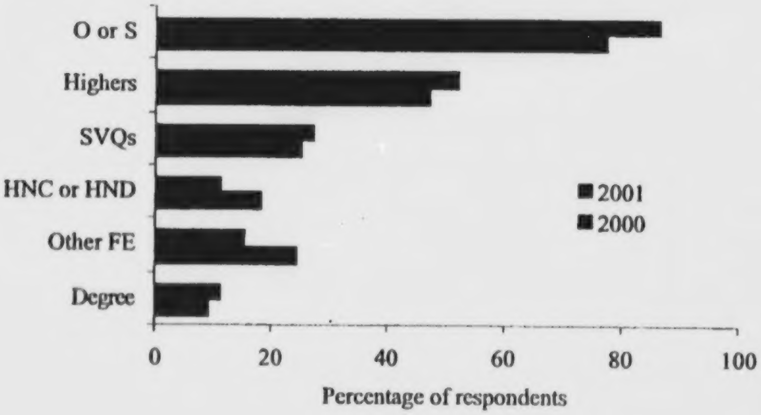
Likewise, authorities were making efforts with limited success to attract applications from other under-represented groups such as members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. New Deal applicants were also being sought but were often found to be unsuitable: one authority interviewed all New Deal applicants but was only able to appoint one. Another indicated that none of its New Deal applicants met the criteria for selection.

### *2.3.2 Qualifications*

Overall there was no evidence of a decline in the level of qualifications held by classroom assistants during successive years of the Initiative. Indeed, half the 2001 sample of classroom assistants had qualifications in childcare and/or education, compared with only a third of the previous year's sample. Some of this increase can be accounted for by the numbers achieving qualifications while in post, in particular modules for the Professional Development Award (PDA) for classroom assistants.

A comparison of the qualifications held by respondents in 2000 and 2001 is shown in Figure 2.1 below. A higher percentage in 2001 held degrees, SCE Highers, Ordinary and Standard Grades, and Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

*Figure 2.1: Qualifications of classroom assistants in 2000 and in 2001*



The apparent decline in HNC/HND and other FE qualifications is probably a consequence of our analysing qualifications related to childcare and education separately in 2001: by that time it was clear that these qualifications needed a category of their own. From the 2001 survey we are thus able to say that 15 of the 131 classroom assistant respondents (12%) held a nursery nurse qualification. Nine of these had held posts as nursery nurses in early stages primary classes, supporting Early Intervention, before becoming classroom assistants.

The first survey had revealed that some authorities were not distinguishing between nursery nurses/classroom assistants employed under the Early Intervention Programme and those employed under the Classroom Assistant Initiative. Interestingly, by 2001 only one authority response made reference to Early Intervention Assistants. Although a number of those assistants who were initially employed to support Early Intervention have since moved into posts as general classroom assistants, many general classroom assistants spend some of their time supporting Early Intervention work. (See Figure 4.5)

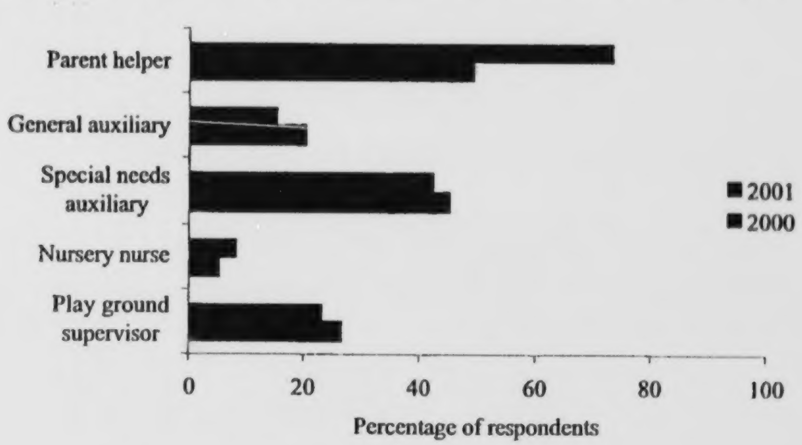
### 2.3.3 *Previous school-based experience of classroom assistants*

*Previous experience*

Most of the classroom assistants who responded to the 2001 survey had previous school-based experience, and more than half had acquired it in the schools in which they subsequently worked. Three-quarters (73%) had volunteered as parent helpers, almost half (42%) had worked as SEN auxiliaries and almost a quarter (23%) had been playground supervisors. The remainder had been nursery nurses, general auxiliaries, dinner hall supervisors, or clerical assistants. Only eight of our sample (6%) appeared to have had no previous school-based experience.

Figure 2.2 below presents these figures in comparison with those from the 2000 survey. The comparison shows a small reduction from 2000 to 2001 in the numbers who were previously in paid posts of various kinds, and an increase in those whose experience was as parent helpers – a possible indication that the supply of people available to transfer from other posts within schools is coming to an end.

*Figure 2.2: School-based experience of classroom assistants in 2000 and in 2001*



The trend for SEN auxiliaries to transfer to classroom assistant posts, which was identified in the first survey, was still evident in 2001. Headteachers reported that approximately 40% of newly appointed classroom assistants in 2001 had previously been SEN auxiliaries in the school. This clearly impacts on the supply of SEN auxiliaries, discussed in Section 3.2.1 below. The implications for the supply of classroom assistants are only likely to be of concern if further large numbers are to be recruited.

*Concurrent posts in school*

There was some evidence that classroom assistants held more than one post within the school to which they were appointed. In 2001 one-fifth (21%) of classroom assistant respondents also held another part-time post in the school, for example as playground supervisor or special needs auxiliary, compared to over a quarter (27%) of the sample in 2000. This decline is largely the result of the increased allocation of classroom assistants, which was often achieved by increasing the hours worked by existing part-time classroom assistants.

As before, playground supervision most frequently featured as the second role for those assistants who had combined posts. It is perhaps worth clarifying that in some authorities playground supervision appears to be included as part of the classroom assistants' remit, rather than as a separate post, while in other authorities it is not. (See also Section 3.3.2.)

Five of the 131 sample classroom assistants held concurrent part-time SEN auxiliary posts. Between the two surveys, one authority had combined the budgets for these two roles and now employs assistants for a combined remit. Because this was a recent change we gathered little information about its impact, other than brief reference made by the headteacher of case study school E. (See Appendix 5.)

## 2.4 Classroom assistants' views of the job

### *2.4.1 Satisfaction with the job*

In September 2001 classroom assistants were still reporting high levels of satisfaction. Most were very satisfied with the job, the hours and the conditions in their schools. However, the size of majority had reduced by approximately 5–10% compared with the previous year, with a corresponding increase in the numbers who reported that they were only 'somewhat' satisfied with these aspects of being a classroom assistant. There was no increase in the very small numbers indicating that they were not satisfied.

The 2001 survey included a new question about classroom assistants' satisfaction with salary-level, as this had been raised as a concern in the previous year's responses. In marked contrast to the other aspects of the job, more than half (62%) of the classroom assistants in the sample were not satisfied with the salary, and only 10% were very satisfied. Classroom assistants working for 20 or more hours per week were more dissatisfied with their salary than those working shorter hours.

### 2.4.2 *Future aspirations*

In the 2000 survey, almost half the classroom assistants indicated that they wanted to develop their careers further. By 2001 two-thirds (66%) of respondents indicated that within the next few years they hoped to undertake further training and qualifications relevant to their present post. However, only a minority wanted to develop their careers beyond being classroom assistants in the foreseeable future. Approximately one in seven (15%) was interested in training related to learning support, and one in twelve (8%) wanted to enter primary teacher training. A further 15% indicated that three to five years was their preferred time-scale for each of these types of further training. Very few respondents were considering nursery nurse training, secondary teacher training or a career in another field.

### 2.4.3 *Concerns*

In their responses to the first survey, classroom assistants raised a number of concerns. These included the low pay and lack of career development opportunities, and the lack of time to provide all the support schools needed. Some classroom assistants were anxious about what they were being asked to do and how this related to their remit, and a few felt undervalued or excluded from the staff team. In the second survey these same areas were the focus of most classroom assistant concerns, and we obtained more detail about some of them.

*Salary*

In 2001, classroom assistants' main concern was their salary-level. Many believed that the pay did not reflect the level of responsibility and variety of tasks they undertook. There were also grumbles about unfairness in the system; pay rates varied from one authority to another, and some classroom assistants reported that the same salary was being offered to new appointees as to those who had several years of experience and had gained qualifications. The lack of prospects for career advancement was a growing concern, and several respondents suggested that there was now a need for a grading structure related to qualifications and experience.

*Training*

Opportunities for training varied across the country, and were a matter of concern for some classroom assistants. A number referred to the poor quality and lack of relevance of the courses offered, delays in provision, and lack of choice of venue and times at which training was available.

*Time*

Another source of irritation was shortage of time. Some classroom assistants felt frustrated because they could not find enough time to liaise with teachers. Others echoed the views of teachers and headteachers (see Section 4.2.1) that insufficient classroom assistant time was allocated to schools to meet all their support needs.

*Remit*

Classroom assistants also expressed anxiety about their remit: some believed that it was too varied and open to abuse. Others had reservations about the lack of distinction between various non-teaching roles in schools. Several classroom assistants thought that they undertook too much administration and were not in the classroom enough; strained relationships between clerical staff and classroom assistants were reported in a few schools. One assistant reported that some teachers did not seem to distinguish between SEN auxiliaries and classroom assistants, and taking this a step further another expressed the view that difficulties arose because teachers had not been trained in how best to work with classroom assistants. Two classroom assistants explicitly pointed to the McCrone settlement *(A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century)* and suggested that it would have a consequential shift in their role to more general support outwith the classroom. Others expressed similar worries without directly linking them to McCrone.

*Lack of team feeling*

Finally, although many classroom assistants thought that they were valued as an important part of the school team, there were still a few who felt that a 'them and us' situation had arisen. Some associated this with classroom assistants having separate breaks because of playground supervision duties. However, not all classroom assistants with playground duties felt excluded, indicating that some schools are succeeding in making their assistants feel part of the team even in the absence of shared break-times.

## 2.5 Summary of findings

- By September 2001 there were approximately 4400 classroom assistants in Scottish primary schools, providing the equivalent of approximately 3900 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts.
- The gender and age profile of classroom assistants remained steady as their numbers increased. The majority of classroom assistants are women, aged between 35 and 44 years.
- The proportion of classroom assistants with qualifications in childcare increased during the evaluation, partly because some assistants completed relevant courses while in post.
- Most successful applicants for classroom assistant posts had previous experience in schools as parent helpers, special needs auxiliaries or playground supervisors.
- Most classroom assistants were very satisfied with the job, their hours and the conditions in their schools. However, satisfaction levels declined a little as the evaluation progressed.
- More than half the classroom assistants were dissatisfied with their salaries. Those who worked longer hours tended to be more dissatisfied than others.

- In 2001 two-thirds of classroom assistant respondents hoped to undertake further training and qualifications relevant to their current post in the next year or two.
- Although approximately one quarter of the sample of classroom assistants aspired to train as teachers, many indicated that they were thinking of at least three to five years ahead.
- Classroom assistants' concerns about the Initiative focused on the salary, training opportunities, lack of time, and to a lesser extent on the remit, and lack of team feeling.

# 3: Implementing the Initiative

## 3.1 Introduction

Although the Classroom Assistants Initiative is a national programme, it is implemented at local authority level. In this section, we report on how education authorities interpreted national guidelines by recruiting, deploying and training classroom assistants to meet their local priorities.

## 3.2 Recruitment and selection

By 2001, education authorities reported that basic procedures for recruiting classroom assistants were well established. These were usually undertaken by education authority personnel working in conjunction with headteachers. Advertisements in the local press and information provided directly by schools continued to be the most successful means of attracting suitable applicants. In some areas job centres also provided candidates.

### *3.2.1 Numbers of applicants*

Overall there appears to have been an adequate supply of candidates for classroom assistant posts. Almost half of the education authorities reported that the number of applicants in 2001 was comparable to earlier recruitment rounds. Some authorities believed that excessive demand for posts resulted in potentially suitable candidates being turned away and three authorities had received more applications than in previous rounds.

In contrast, the number of applicants declined in eight authorities; two experienced difficulties forming short leets and one had to re-advertise posts because the initial response was disappointing. Not surprisingly, there were fewer applicants for posts in rural areas where the number of potential applicants was clearly smaller.

#### *Impact on supply of candidates for other positions*

Initially some concerns were expressed that the recruitment of large numbers of classroom assistants might deplete the supply of nursery nurses and qualified childcare workers in the pre-school sector. By September 2001 fewer than one in five (17%) education authorities had difficulty filling pre-school posts but almost half (45%) could not attract sufficient candidates for SEN auxiliary posts because many experienced SEN auxiliaries were applying for classroom assistant posts. In a number of authorities, classroom assistant posts were more attractive because they were permanent as opposed to the temporary posts offered to SEN auxiliaries. However there were exceptions. One authority pointed out that its SEN auxiliaries were on a higher salary than classroom assistants, while another had combined the two roles:

> *SEN auxiliaries now amalgamated with classroom assistants. Common salary scale and job description to include special needs for all. Training will be provided in special needs.*
>
> (EA)

In another authority a classroom assistant in our sample thought that in practice the two roles were being combined.

> *In* [authority X] *the role of classroom assistant and special needs assistant are unfortunately beginning to merge. This seems to me to be a bad move as attributes and abilities for each job are quite different. Process of employment is also quite different. Classroom assistant – stiff interview and competing with many others. Special Needs –* ***no*** *interview, merely a request to be put on a list and name police checked.*
>
> (CA)

### 3.2.2 *Selection procedures*

Selection procedures for classroom assistants remained unchanged in most authorities. However, by 2001 a few demanded new minimum requirements for the post. Some authorities required Standard Grade passes (in English and in one case also Mathematics); while another had downgraded the requirement for passes at Standard Grade from essential to desirable.

### 3.2.3 *Terms and conditions*

Many authorities offered classroom assistants permanent contracts of employment, the majority (21 authorities) from the date of their initial appointment, while others were in the process of converting fixed-term posts to permanent contracts. Two authorities indicated that they would continue to offer fixed-term contracts until March 2002 – the remainder of the period for which the Excellence Funding is committed.

Only six authorities reported that they had changed the terms and conditions of employment for classroom assistants during the course of the Initiative. Three provided no further details but a fourth had combined the special needs and classroom assistants' budgets and begun to issue permanent contracts to classroom assistants. A fifth authority was 'developing permanent school provision at a basic level' by making at least some classroom assistant posts permanent. And finally, the sixth reported that they had regraded the classroom assistant's salary from a fixed point for all to a range on the GS1 scale and increased their holiday entitlement. Existing classroom assistants continued to work a 32 hour week while new appointees worked 25 hours per week. Some consequences of this change are mentioned elsewhere in the report.

The hourly rate of pay varied considerably across authorities. During the pilot phase classroom assistants' pay ranged from £4.35 to over £7 per hour. By September 2001 pay rates ranged from a similar low level of £4.29 up to £9.30 in one authority, but most were paid between £5 and £6 per hour.

*Weekly hours*

At the time of the pilot projects, 27.5 hours per week were the most common hours of work. This allowed 2.5 hours for planning and liaison with class teachers. However, during the course of the Initiative, some authorities reduced classroom assistants' hours to 25 hours per week, thus eliminating planning time from their contracts of employment. By September 2001 the largest number of contracts were for 25-hour weeks. Only two authorities employed classroom assistants for more than 30 hours per week, although in one all new contracts included provision for a 25-hour week.

### *3.2.4 Staff turnover*

Almost all authorities reported some, albeit a small, turnover of classroom assistants during the session 2000/2001. A considerable range of reasons was given for these classroom assistants resigning their posts and included part-time classroom assistants who accepted full-time posts and nursery nurses who moved into other, better paid, jobs. Many authorities had one or two assistants who resigned to pursue teacher training, while a few assistants transferred into clerical posts in schools. Others resigned for family and personal reasons, such as relocation, pregnancy or retirement. One authority mentioned that a number of classroom assistants had accepted posts in other authorities. This supported claims by other respondents that different terms and conditions were contributing to classroom assistants' dissatisfaction.

In the 2001 survey, 11 of the 74 headteachers we heard from (18%) reported losing at least one classroom assistant during the past year. The range of reasons given was similar to those indicated by authorities; significantly only one classroom assistant left because of unsatisfactory job performance.

## 3.3 Deployment

### *3.3.1 Allocation to schools*

By August 2001 the majority of authorities (21 out of 29 responses) confirmed that they had deployed classroom assistants in all the authorities' primary schools. Three omitted the question, but the remaining five authorities indicated that some of their schools had no classroom assistants. For the most part these were authorities with very small schools (rolls of less than 10 pupils). They blamed insufficient Excellence Funding combined with the specific circumstances of the schools.

The number of schools without classroom assistants varied from 6 in one authority to 30 in another. In all there were approximately 100 primary schools across Scotland with no classroom assistants in September 2001. However, some of the authorities concerned still had appointments pending at the time of our survey.

The key factors influencing authorities' allocation decisions were:

- the size of the school roll
- adult:pupil ratios; and
- priority to schools with a high proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.

In addition, a small number of authorities indicated that they also took into account teacher:pupil ratio, teaching headteachers, and schools with large composite classes. Fewer still indicated that special educational needs or performance on literacy and numeracy tests affected their deployment of classroom assistants.

### *3.3.2 Guidance to schools about approaches to deployment*

Most authorities offered little, or no specific guidance to schools on how headteachers should deploy classroom assistants. The exceptions were for playground supervision (11 of the 29 authorities advised headteachers to include this within classroom assistants' remit) and for support for children with special educational needs (18 of the 29 authorities). A few authorities recommended that classroom assistants could also support early literacy and numeracy, personal and social development and ICT, and also indicated the maximum number of classes/stages with which assistants should work.

## 3.4 Support and training

### *3.4.1 Induction*

The provision of training and support for classroom assistants changed as the Initiative progressed. Eleven of the 29 authorities had made recent alterations to the induction training which they offered to classroom assistants. Some had extended the amount of centralised induction training offered to new appointees, while others had cut it back because of reduced recruitment activities. In some authorities the content of induction training was modified to take account of identified needs.

### *3.4.2 Continuing training for classroom assistants*

The structure and content of continuing professional development for classroom assistants varied across Scotland. Twenty-one of the 29 authorities indicated that they ran training courses for classroom assistants. In some cases availability of places was limited. By 2001 one third (30%) of our classroom assistant respondents had regularly attended training courses run by their authority but a quarter (26%) had not. However, many of these were very recent appointees. In addition, eighteen authorities indicated that classroom assistants were welcome to attend courses primarily aimed at other staff. Over a third (38%) of the 2001 sample of classroom assistants had attended such courses.

During the course of this evaluation, a specific qualification for classroom assistants – the Professional Development Award (PDA): Classroom Assistants – was developed by the Scottish Qualifications Agency. By September 2001, all but four of the authorities were participating in this award scheme. Fifteen authorities were offering it to all their classroom assistants, while the remainder provided limited access. Approximately two-fifths (41%) of classroom assistant respondents reported receiving regular training related to the PDA. However, as many again had not, and the remainder attended such training on an occasional basis.

A number of classroom assistants reported that appropriate training opportunities had not been offered to them. Some thought that this was because they were newly appointed but others, whose initial appointment pre-dated the training provision, believed that their on-the-job experience made training irrelevant. Some encountered difficulties identifying training which fitted into their class contact times, and a few were unable to participate in out-of-hours training because of family commitments.

A small number of classroom assistants thought they were not eligible for training:

> *My position is only temporary and I work eleven hours a week. As I understand it PDA training is offered to those working 14 hours or more.*
>
> (CA)

> *Told by HT that there was no room for development in a CA remit and no money available for CA courses.*
>
> (CA)

*Headteacher views on external training for classroom assistants*

Under half (43%) of respondent headteachers reported that their classroom assistants regularly attended training sessions, while a further quarter (27%) indicated that their attendance was occasional. This training usually took place during school hours, was funded by the authority and was specifically targeted at classroom assistants. In many cases it was also certificated. However, almost a third (32%) of the headteachers reported that classroom assistants also underwent training in their own time, with part of it paid for out of school funds. Six of the 74 headteachers indicated that some classroom assistants even paid for their own training.

*Classroom assistant's views on external training*

School-based on-the-job training was rated highly by most classroom assistants. They particularly valued support from class teachers and other more experienced classroom assistants. However, external training opportunities, especially the PDA courses, were also thought to be helpful because they facilitated contact amongst classroom assistants.

> *PDA is most detailed and relevant of the courses* plus *opportunity to compare experience with other CAs in other schools.*
>
> (CA)

Not all the comments about PDA courses were positive; a few were equivocal and several were totally negative:

> *...I've only done the modules in the PDA and I've found them very basic, almost to the point of insulting. I know of many CAs that feel the same.*
>
> (CA)

External courses related to Early Intervention and also computing were mentioned as particularly relevant. And some classroom assistants singled out college staff for praise.

*Classroom assistants' requests for future training*

Classroom assistants pointed to their continuing need for training in the use of computers and ICT. Some required a basic introduction, but others wanted to extend their existing skills. Many also identified the 5–14 curriculum, in particular support for mathematics and language, as another training need. Discipline and the management of challenging behaviour, learning support and special educational needs were each listed by a number of classroom assistants. Some simply indicated that they would welcome any relevant training and perceived qualifications as an added bonus.

A few classroom assistants wanted to undertake teacher training and hoped that account might be taken of their experience as classroom assistants:

> *I would like to see the qualification for classroom assistants to be set at a standard that would mean after 3 years as a CA plus the CA qualification it would be possible to enter teacher training at perhaps 2nd or 3rd year level.*
>
> (CA)

The two-year in-service teacher training course for classroom assistants and others in similar support posts now being piloted by Strathclyde University may soon fill this need.

Finally, several classroom assistants pointed out that teachers too would benefit from training, especially joint training with classroom assistants. This would hopefully develop teamwork.

### *3.4.3 Support and training for other staff*

The lack of training for teachers who work with classroom assistants, was a cause for concern in the 2000 survey, and responses in 2001 indicate that little had changed. Only a quarter (26%) of the class teachers had received any training, support or guidance in connection with the Classroom Assistants Initiative. All but two of these found it helpful. The most satisfied were those who had participated in school meetings which discussed the classroom assistant's remit and the most effective ways of working with them. In contrast, those who had only received written guidelines were the least likely to be satisfied.

Some of the delay in addressing teachers' training needs can be attributed to the timing of the release of the staff development package which the University of Strathclyde developed for SEED. This was distributed to authorities at about the time that our 2001 survey took place and a number of authorities reported that they were planning to use these training materials to support staff development in the use of classroom assistants.

Class teacher respondents identified very similar training needs in both surveys. In each some teachers thought that time with the classroom assistant, without pupils present, in order to plan and discuss their work, would be the most helpful development. Only a quarter of teacher respondents identified areas in which they would like to be trained, of which the largest number of requests was for more guidance about the classroom assistant's role:

> *Guidelines about what CAs can be asked to do and what they should not be asked.*
>
> (CA)

Others wanted help with defining good or best practice:

> *Perhaps a joint meeting to define good practice. Could be input from staff who already have experienced good practice.*
>
> (CA)

In addition, a number of the teachers wished to meet with other staff, especially those from other schools, in order to share experiences and ideas. Others indicated that any relevant training would be welcome.

## 3.5 Summary of findings

*Recruitment*

- In most authorities there was no shortage of applicants for classroom assistant posts throughout the implementation period. Three authorities even reported an increase in the number of applicants received. However the number of applicants declined in some authorities and two had difficulties attracting suitable candidates.
- Early concerns about the impact of recruiting large numbers of classroom assistants on the supply of staff for pre-school establishments has proved largely unfounded.
- However, by September 2001 almost half of the authorities reported some difficulties recruiting temporary SEN auxiliaries; many experienced staff had taken up permanent classroom assistant posts instead. One authority combined the budgets and roles of SEN auxiliaries and classroom assistants.

*Terms of employment*

- The majority of authorities issued permanent contracts of employment to classroom assistants. By September 2001 only four authorities were not offering permanent contracts to any of their classroom assistants. Others employed classroom assistants on a mixture of permanent, temporary and fixed-term contracts.
- Most classroom assistants were being paid between £5 and £6 per hour, but the rate varied considerably across authorities from £4.29 to £9.30.
- The most common length of a classroom assistant's working week was reduced from 27.5 hours during the pilot phase to 25 hours by September 2001.
- Staff turnover was generally low and suitable replacements were found with little difficulty. There is some evidence to suggest that variation in terms and conditions between authorities impacts on turnover.

*Deployment*

- By September 2001 most authorities had at least one classroom assistant in every primary school; schools without classroom assistants were mostly very small with fewer than 10 pupils each.

- Throughout the evaluation period, adult:pupil ratios and school rolls remained the key factors which determined the allocation of classroom assistants. Schools in areas of socio-economic disadvantage were also given priority.

*Training for classroom assistants*

- The classroom assistant induction training changed during the evaluation; both content and format were adjusted to meet local needs.
- The range and accessibility of other training opportunities for classroom assistants has improved, but accessibility is not uniform across Scotland.
- By September 2001 most authorities offered training related to the Professional Development Award (PDA): Classroom Assistants. Availability was limited in some areas and 40% of classroom assistant respondents had received no training related to the PDA.
- A quarter of all classroom assistant respondents had not received *any* training by September 2001. Most were recent appointees.
- Classroom assistant training was usually offered during school hours and funded by the authorities. However, up to a third of headteachers reported that some training took place in classroom assistants' own time, and was paid for by the school or even by the classroom assistants themselves.
- The timing of courses could cause difficulties for schools and classroom assistants because of work and personal commitments.
- Small numbers of classroom assistants reported that they believed they were not entitled to attend training courses.
- Most classroom assistants believed that school-based on-the-job support was the most helpful form of development. Some found the PDA courses and college staff very supportive; however, others reported that the quality and relevance of these courses was poor.
- Classroom assistants would like more training in ICT and computer use; the 5–14 curriculum, especially support for mathematics and language; discipline and the management of challenging behaviour; and learning support and special educational needs.

*Training for other staff*

- Only a quarter of the class teachers in our sample had received any training on how to work with classroom assistants. However, a number of authorities plan to use a recently published staff development package for this purpose.
- A number of teachers wanted guidance about the classroom assistant's role and also on what constituted best or even good practice. Meetings with other staff, especially from other schools, were appreciated.

# 4: Classroom assistants at work

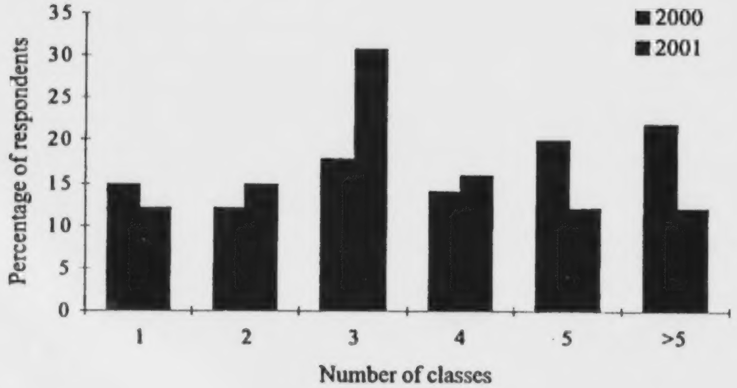
## 4.1 Introduction

This section presents evidence of how classroom assistants work in schools. It explores how they are allocated, the range of tasks they undertake, and the support they receive. This section outlines the broad picture obtained from the survey data. The case studies in Appendix 5 offer a number of examples of the range of approaches taken to meet individual schools' needs.

## 4.2 Allocation of classroom assistants within school

The majority of classroom assistants responding to our 2001 survey worked more than 20 hours per week. However individual assistants were usually allocated to a number of classes. Figure 4.1 illustrates the reduction in the average number of classes which classroom assistants supported between 2000 and 2001. By 2001 the most common allocation was one classroom assistant to three classes.

*Figure 4.1: Number of classes worked in by classroom assistants in sessions 2000/1 and 2001/2*



As a consequence, some teachers received more classroom assistant support than they had at the beginning of the initiative. Responses to the first survey, indicated that more than half the teachers (56%) were receiving five hours or less of support each week. By September 2001 the situation had improved and only 39% of teachers received so little support. The proportion of teachers receiving over 20 hours per week support remained constant.

### *4.2.1 Satisfaction with time allocation*

*Class teachers*

Most class teachers were content with the amount of support they received. Just over half (52%) believed that it was 'about right', but some still observed:

> *More time would obviously help learning and teaching but the amount allocated is a reasonable share of CA time.*
>
> (CT)

And more than a third (36%) indicated that they did not have enough classroom assistant support. Many of these were teachers of maximum sized classes of infants, or of multiple-stage composite classes. They also included teachers who had a classroom assistant with them to work with a particular child or small group, and who would have liked some more general support as well.

Teachers identified a range of activities for which they would welcome more classroom assistant support in class including:

- practical group activities, for example in art and environmental studies
- paired reading
- practice of reading words and phonics
- language and mathematics games
- registration
- collecting dinner money
- preparing materials for lessons; and
- putting up displays.

A number of the comments indicated that teachers were constantly weighing up the benefits of using classroom assistants for administrative tasks that relieved the teacher's load against those derived from extra reinforcement with pupils. Some teachers also highlighted the lack of time for planning and discussion without pupils present.

Only two teachers reported that they had more than enough classroom assistant time this session. They had a P6/7 and a P7 class. Their comments indicated a belief that there were fewer ways in which classroom assistants could provide 'hands on' help to pupils in upper classes, and that it would therefore be better if the assistants spent more time with the younger classes.

### *Headteachers*

Headteachers were a little less satisfied than teachers with the amount of classroom assistant support available: more than half (57%) felt that classroom assistants had insufficient time to support the school as a whole, and only a third (31%) thought that the amount was about right. Echoing the teachers, in open comments a number of the headteachers indicated that they could happily make good use of more classroom assistant time. A number suggested that one assistant per stage (generally two classes), or even one per class would be the optimum allocation. Some of these headteachers indicated that they had low levels of classroom assistant provision or worked in areas of deprivation. In accord with teachers' responses, several headteachers indicated that more classroom assistant time was needed to allow teachers and assistants to meet without pupils present.

### 4.2.2 *Changes to allocation of classroom assistants*

More than half the headteachers (61%) reported that they had made changes to the way they allocated classroom assistant time for the session 2001/02. In almost half the schools (46%), the headteacher and senior management team had involved teaching staff in decision-making. One in five headteachers (42%) indicated that classroom assistants themselves had been included in discussions.

In many cases, changes were required to accommodate additional classroom assistants or extensions to existing assistants' working hours. Another frequent change was the rotation of classroom assistants to different stages of the school in order to broaden their experience. Usually schools allocated the increased amount of classroom assistant time to classroom support. However, some schools had increased the amount of break or lunchtime support provided by classroom assistants, or allocated more time to the preparation of resources. In one case the headteacher made it clear that they had adjusted classroom assistant responsibilities as a consequence of recommendations in *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*:

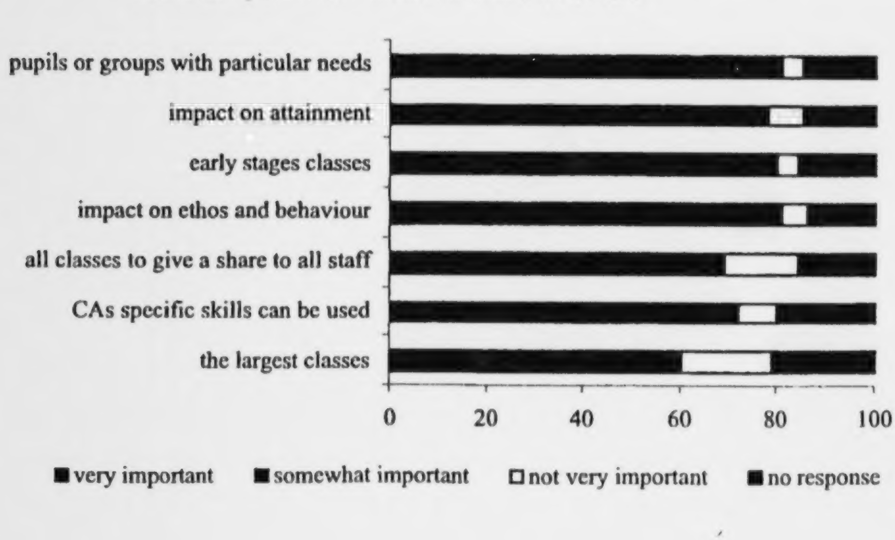
> *Greater degree of responsibility in escorting/managing movement of pupils in/out and with school. More responsibility for admin. tasks eg Registration, lunch numbers, money collection, reply slips etc collection from pupils. This is in the spirit of new Teacher Contracts and Time for Teaching.*
>
> (HT)

Only one headteacher had adjusted the classroom assistants' timetable to create liaison time:

> *Reduced time in the morning so that there is time for liaison with class teachers after school regarding next day planning*
>
> (HT)

The factor most likely to influence the allocation of classroom assistants was the presence of pupils or groups with particular needs. (See Figure 4.2 below.)

*Figure 4.2: The relative importance of various factors to headteachers in determining allocation of classroom assistants in session 2001/2*



Over half the headteachers indicated impact on attainment was important, as was help with early stages classes. In addition, almost half considered it very important to allocate classroom assistants where they would have an influence on school ethos and behaviour. Giving a share to all staff was seen as relatively less important, as was assigning classroom assistants to classes where their specific skills could be put to best use. Class size *per se* was the least important factor from this list.

### *4.2.3 Difficulties over allocation of classroom assistants*

Approximately a quarter of the headteachers (23%) indicated that it was problematic allocating classroom assistant time to different classes and to other tasks across the school. This was largely a consequence of an insufficient allocation of classroom assistant time. Some indicated that this problem had been alleviated as more classroom assistant time was allocated to their schools, but others were still grappling with it.

Teachers in our first survey pointed out that classroom assistants were over stretched and could be called upon to deal with whole school issues. By 2001, the majority of teachers had experienced these problems, however, most teachers (66%) reported that such occurrences were now rare and did not interfere with their planned classroom activities. In contrast, 20% reported that this problem had affected both the range of activities they set for their pupils and the tasks they planned for classroom assistants. Several teachers identified specific activities they were reluctant to plan if they could not rely on the support of the assistant:

> *Due to inconsistency (trips/office workload/illness child) I stopped planned group tasks eg library time, PC time.*
>
> (CT)

> *Can't plan for something like 'baking' if assistant unavailable to supervise.*
>
> (CT)

Others indicated how the problem affected the tasks which they assigned to classroom assistants:

> *Often not a set task over weeks but one-off tasks for that day.*
>
> (CT)

> *Tasks given to c/room assistant can become more cosmetic and less child centred.*
>
> (CT)

And a few implied that they restricted classroom assistant time with pupils because it was less disruptive if they were withdrawn at short notice:

> *The tasks she is given can be done when she has time as it does not involve children.*
>
> (CT)

Teachers resorted to flexible planning which could accommodate last minute changes. Most accepted that classroom assistants could be withdrawn but a few expressed some frustration:

> *Have often planned for CA to take reading groups/play a game with group etc and end up having to do it myself which can be frustrating.*
>
> (CT)

Headteachers had also faced other difficulties in allocating classroom assistant time. These included finding time for classroom assistants to meet with teachers without pupils present; the lack of cover available for assistants on extended sick leave; and role clarity between assistants and other support staff.

## 4.3 What classroom assistants do

### *4.3.1 The remit*

*Classroom assistants' perspective*

In both surveys, classroom assistant respondents thought that their remit was clear but some believed that it encompassed too many different tasks:

> *The remit is too varied and wide spread and open to being misconstrued and even abused. Each new phase of classroom assistants seem to have slightly different remits.*
>
> (CA)

A few classroom assistants had been asked to help with tasks they believed to fall outside their remit, including cleaning, making teas and coffees, covering for absent administrative staff, supporting pupils with specific special needs and, on occasions, undertaking what they perceived to be 'teaching' tasks.

> *Taking classes for ICT whilst class teacher taught another area of curriculum.*
>
> (CA)

*Headteacher and class teacher views on the remit*

Few headteachers (14%) indicated that there had been difficulties with defining the role of classroom assistants in their schools. However, some reported that it had taken a bit of time to reach a shared understanding. In contrast, approximately one third (35%) of class teachers contended that there had been difficulties with the remit, and 15% believed that these difficulties had not yet been satisfactorily resolved. Their greatest concern was how to apportion classroom assistants' time between routine administrative tasks, such as preparing materials and displays, and working with the pupils. In some cases the fact that classroom assistants were apparently unwilling to perform the routine tasks added to teachers' difficulties:

> *'Certain' activities are still preferred to 'certain' other activities – eg* [the classroom assistant] *does not 'wish' to help display work or photocopy (at times), would rather work with children.*
>
> (CT)

This remained an ongoing concern for some teachers, whereas others reported that they had resolved their difficulties through discussion:

> *Last year CA was not always happy to do things for teacher – wall displays, mounting pictures etc and wanted more hands on with pupils. Discussed as a staff and it's working better now for both CA and CT.*
>
> (CT)

Some teachers were concerned that their colleagues contributed to the problem by asking classroom assistants to spend too much time on routine tasks. As one put it:

> *Some teachers still find it difficult not to use CA as general 'dogsbodies'!*
>
> (CT)

A handful of teachers thought that classroom assistants acted inappropriately or were not qualified to carry out their role:

> *There was some dissatisfaction with classroom assistants who were rather loud, didn't stick to allotted tasks, overstepped authority with children (interrupting teacher, admonishing children inappropriately).*
>
> (CT)

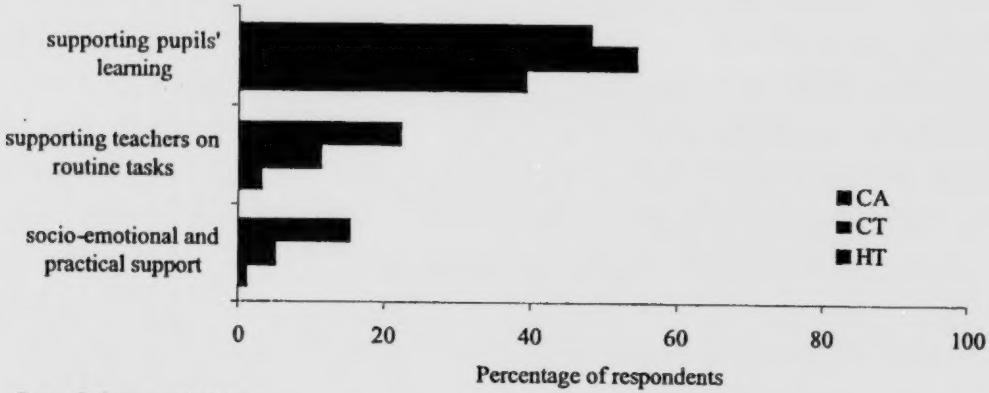
> *It has been our experience that some of the assistants don't have the capabilities to carry out their remit of supporting learning in class.*
>
> (CT)

### 4.3.2 How classroom assistant time is spent

*Classroom-based activities*

Headteachers, class teachers and classroom assistants agreed, both in 2000 and in 2001, that the largest amount of classroom assistant's time is spent supporting pupils within the classroom. However, there was some evidence that classroom assistants believed they spent more time supporting teachers and providing socio-emotional and practical support for pupils than the teachers themselves recognised. (See Figure 4.3 below.)

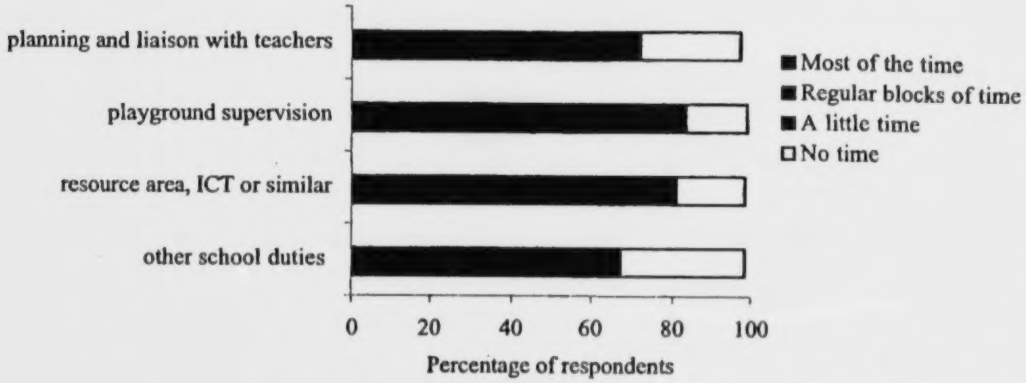
*Figure 4.3: 2001 respondents' perceptions of how most classroom assistant time is spent in class*



*Out of class activities*

In contrast to the majority view that most classroom assistant time was spent in class, a substantial minority (15%) of the sample of classroom assistants believed that they spent most of their time on playground supervision. More than half the classroom assistants (62%) reported that they spent a substantial amount of time on this. A third (34%) were heavily involved in undertaking specific responsibility, such as a resource area or ICT support. Most reported that they had little time to plan and liaise with teachers, and a quarter (25%) indicated that they spent no time on this activity. (See Figure 4.4 below)

*Figure 4.4: Classroom assistants' perceptions of how much time they spend on out-of-class activites*

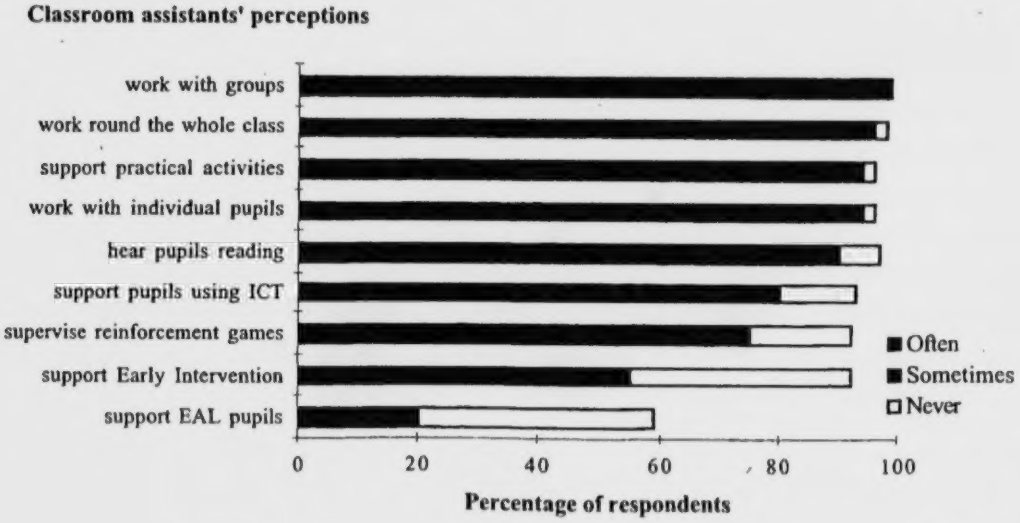


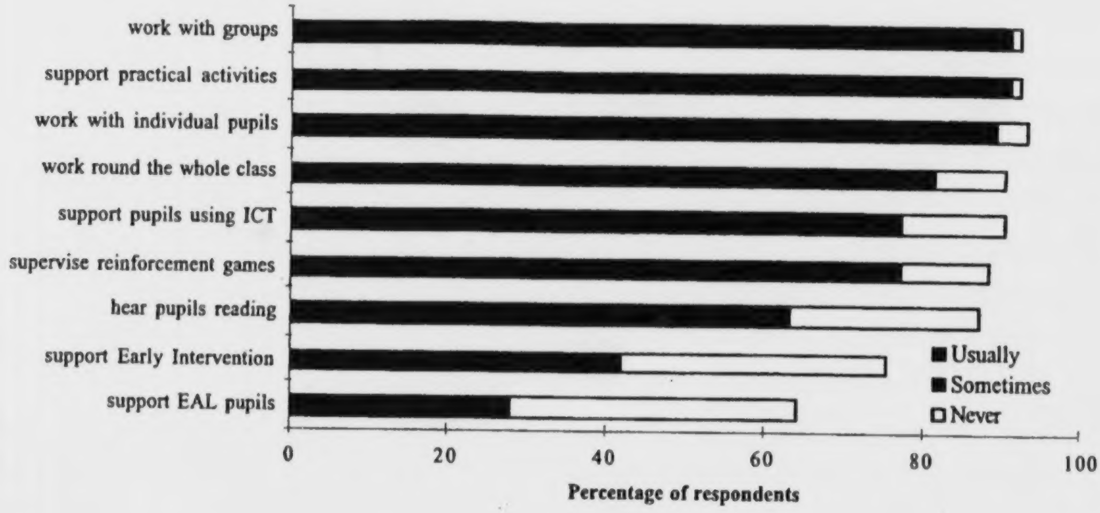
Notwithstanding differences of opinion about how much time was being spent on different activities, a clear majority (81%) of classroom assistants were content with their role. And those who were dissatisfied wanted to spend more time working directly with pupils.

### 4.3.3 Approaches to supporting learning

In both 2000 and 2001 classroom assistants and teachers agreed that assistants supported pupils' learning by working with groups of pupils and providing support for practical activities. In Figure 4.5, the perceptions of classroom assistants and teachers in 2001 are presented in more detail. Sizeable majorities of respondents indicated that classroom assistants spent at least some time on all the listed activities except Early Intervention and the support of English as an Additional Language (EAL). However, more classroom assistants than teachers believe that working round the whole class offering help where needed and also hearing pupils read takes a substantial part of their time in class.

*Figure 4.5 Classroom assistants' and teachers' perceptions of howq classroom assistants are supporting learning*


**Classroom assistants' perceptions**


**Teachers' perceptions**

We observed classroom assistants engaging in all the activities listed in Figure 4.5 with the exception of support for pupils with English as an Additional Language. Some examples can be found in the case studies in Appendix 5.

*Early Intervention and other stage-specific variations*

By 2001 approximately one in five classroom assistants was engaged in Early Intervention activities with pupils in the early stages. Teacher respondents confirm that for at least part of their time, assistants did support Early Intervention. Headteachers explained that with early stage classes, classroom assistants were able to undertake more supervision of practical activities, structured play and group work than was possible with other stages in the school. In the middle to upper primary stages the balance of their work shifted away from supporting groups of pupils to working on a one-to-one basis with individual pupils.

### *4.3.4 Changes in teachers' use of classroom assistant time*

Approximately half of all teacher respondents reported that they had altered the way they worked with classroom assistants during the current session. Most felt these were only minor adjustments, but 14% had implemented substantial changes to the way they used classroom assistant time. The main influencing factors included the need to adapt the work for:

- a different stage
- size of class; or
- balance of pupils' needs, eg for support for learning, behaviour or specific difficulties.

Others took account of the strengths and abilities of their classroom assistants; their skills and experience of working with teachers; and familiarity with the school.

> *The current CA needs a lot of support as she is unused to very young children – I am needing to train her 'on the job'. The previous classroom assistant was superb and needed no real training.*
>
> (CT)

An increase or decrease in the number of hours classroom assistants were allocated to particular classes also created changes. However, in a number of cases teachers reported they were being encouraged to use classroom assistants to free themselves of routine tasks. There was a consequent decrease in the time classroom assistants had available to support pupils. As two teachers explained:

> *I have tried to use the time for routine tasks which reduces the time I as a teacher have to spend on them. There is now no time to support pupils' learning despite her excellent skills.*
>
> (CT)

> *As well as working with groups I have been trying to get CA to do more admin work (eg filing) and putting up displays. However, because children benefit so much from extra help, can feel guilty doing this.*
>
> (CT)

Some teachers believe that the agreement encapsulated in *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (particularly the list of activities which teachers should not now normally undertake) had resulted in this shift in emphasis. This may take time for both teachers and classroom assistants to adjust, especially as in some cases classroom assistants object to undertaking such tasks.

### *4.3.5 Classroom assistants' views on changes in role this session*

The classroom assistants who had been in post before this session were almost equally divided between those who felt there had been substantial changes to their role this year (37%), and those who felt there had not (41%). The most common changes reported related to:

- working with different stages
- the amount of time spent supporting individual pupils
- the allocation of different tasks.

One classroom assistant commented in some detail on the move towards merging the roles of classroom assistant and SEN auxiliary, which some authorities are introducing:

> *This seems to me to be a bad move as attributes and abilities for each job are quite different. Process of employment is also quite different. Classroom assistant – stiff interview and competing with many others. Special Needs –* no *interview, merely a request to be put on a list and name police checked.*
>
> (CA)

Several classroom assistants reported that the amount of playground supervision in their remit had increased. Others highlighted increases in their administrative and supervisory duties and made explicit reference to the

McCrone recommendations *(A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century)* as the reason for the changes:

> *More admin. work ie Dinner money, form collecting etc in line with McCrone recommendations.*
>
> (CA)

Three quarters (78%) of classroom assistant respondents believed that teachers required different things of them as time went on. Some saw this as a consequence of the teachers' increasing familiarity with the role of a classroom assistant:

> *I think the teachers are better informed of the CA's role and therefore more relaxed with us in the class.*
>
> (CA)

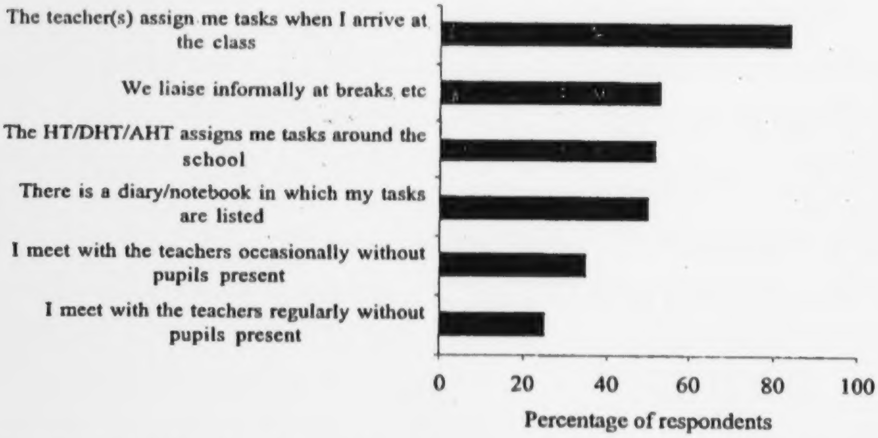
Others believed it was recognition of their growing expertise:

> *As the teachers get to know my strengths and talents eg ICT, practical activities, art etc they make better use of my time.*
>
> (CA)

## 4.4 Planning and liaison

Time for planning and liaison remained an issue throughout the evaluation. As can be seen from Figure 4.6 below, the majority of classroom assistants (84%) were assigned tasks by teachers when they arrived in the classroom. This allows teachers to maintain their flexibility but imposes limitations on the use of classroom assistants.

*Figure 4.6: How classroom assistants say their tasks are planned*



Engaging in regular planning meetings is still a minority experience (reported by 25%); although a further (35%) indicated that they occasionally met to discuss their work with the teacher without the pupils present. There is some evidence that formal planning time declined over the evaluation period. In the first survey, 39% of the classroom assistants reported that time was allocated for planning and liaison, on a daily or for some a weekly basis. This decrease may be a consequence of changes to classroom assistants' contracts as reported in Section 3.

Nevertheless planning did take place. Approximately half of classroom assistant respondents (53%) reported liaising informally with teachers at break times and at other odd moments throughout the working day; and a half (50%) indicated that teachers maintained diaries or notebooks for their use. One class teacher explained how this worked:

> *I now have a jotter, in which I write down the tasks/groups to work with and a brief explanation of what is required. It seems a bit impersonal but it works well and the classroom assistant will ask for clarification if my instructions are ambiguous/unclear. It saves time chatting and is also a good way of prioritising/planning tasks.*
>
> (CT)

However, only 40% of the classroom assistants were satisfied with these opportunities. Most of the rest (42%) did not always find enough time, while 21 of the 131 respondents (16%) considered the arrangements to be inadequate. Similarly low numbers of the teachers (36%) felt they had sufficient time to discuss things with their classroom assistants. Communication was often described as rushed and lacking depth and a number pointed to the disruptive effect on pupils:

> *CA starts at 9.30 therefore children are starting their tasks and I have to stop to show CA what to do.*
>
> (CT)

> *No time is allocated to liaise with staff and teacher has to interrupt lesson at times to give instruction.*
>
> (CA)

Notwithstanding these difficulties, both teachers and classroom assistants reported that as they got to know each others' expectations and abilities planning became easier and quicker:

> *As we have worked together for a time we manage to plan in breaks etc, but it would be more difficult with a new assistant.*
>
> (CT)

> *Having been in the job nearly 3 years unless it's something new I now know how the teachers like certain things done.*
>
> (CA)

However, many teachers believed that more time for planning and liaison without pupils present would allow them to do more:

> *More time to access and discuss pupils' development/progress would be useful. Discussion on how tasks support learning would also be an advantage.*
>
> (CT)

> *...some tasks need to be explained in detail which can be difficult if pupils require attention.*
>
> (CT)

> *It is always difficult to find time to explain things properly, therefore misunderstandings do sometimes happen.*
>
> (CT)

## 4.5 In-school support and training

In-school support for classroom assistants was provided in a variety of ways. Most classroom assistants (69%) had occasional progress meetings with headteachers or a designated classroom assistant co-ordinator. These were convened when it was perceived to be necessary by 42% of headteachers. Others headteachers scheduled termly or monthly meetings. Issues addressed included:

- working relationships
- clarification of remit
- timetabling
- advice on the needs of specific children
- discipline
- classroom assistants' concerns about their role; and
- review of their training needs.

Some classroom assistants also attended in-service meetings; a quarter (24%) on a regular basis and another third (35%) occasionally. Most (67%) had never attended whole-school planning meetings. Headteachers confirmed that it was unusual for classroom assistants to attend such meetings: only 10% regularly invited them and a further quarter (24%) indicated that they did so occasionally. Reasons for this varied but often classroom assistants' playground duties or shorter hours precluded their attendance at staff meetings. Some headteachers reported that they used progress meetings to keep classroom assistants informed.

### *4.5.1 Classroom assistants' views of in-school support*

Overall, classroom assistants perceived in-school support to be more helpful than external training opportunities. They particularly appreciated support from class teachers.

> *I have excellent support from all the teachers who explain to me exactly what they want me to do.*
>
> (CA)

Second to this they relied upon other experienced classroom assistants in the school, or those working in other schools, whom they had met at PDA courses. Some highlighted the importance of on-the-job learning, help received from other teachers, especially depute headteachers, and their own previous experience in the school.

## 4.6 Summary of findings

*Allocation of classroom assistant time within schools*

- Overall the amount of classroom assistant support received by teachers increased during the evaluation period. However, some teachers were still receiving less than one hour per week and some had none at all.

- Most frequently classroom assistants worked with three classes but the range varied from one to more than five classes.
- By September 2001 more than a third of teachers and half of headteachers felt that they did not have enough classroom assistant support; and others, who thought that their share of the available time was fair, would nonetheless welcome more. Support for pupils from deprived socio-economic backgrounds and liaison with teachers were identified as requiring more time.
- Additional classroom assistant time had most often been assigned to in-classroom support. However, some schools had increased the time classroom assistants spent on other activities, such as supervision at break times or preparation of resources. A small number of responses in September 2001 indicated that the agreement documented in *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* had led to an increase in classroom assistants' administrative tasks.
- A quarter of the headteachers indicated that they had faced difficulties in determining the best allocation of classroom assistant time among classes and other activities across the school. Some difficulties had been resolved, often because of an increase in classroom assistant support for the school, but others still remained.

*What classroom assistants do*

- Most classroom assistants thought that their remit was clear, and headteachers reported few problems defining the role.
- Throughout the evaluation, respondents reported that the largest amount of classroom assistant time was spent directly supporting pupils. Most classroom assistants were happy with the balance of their different activities and those who were unhappy usually wanted to spend more time in class with pupils.
- Within classes, classroom assistants work with groups of pupils, often supporting practical activities, and with individual pupils.
- Outwith the classroom, classroom assistants spent significant amount of time on playground supervision. In general, less time appeared to be spent on planning and liaison with teachers and on general school duties.
- In contrast to the classroom assistant and headteachers' views, one third of class teachers reported that they had encountered some difficulties, largely centred on the division of tasks within the classroom assistant's remit. Many of these had not been resolved by September 2001.
- Many teachers reported that they had made minor changes to the way they worked with classroom assistants as the Initiative progressed. New classes, an increase in classroom assistant allocation and the developing skills of the assistant usually prompted these. However, a few were responding to *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* by delegating more administrative tasks to assistants.

- Many classroom assistants thought that changes in their role were a consequence of working with pupils in different stages. However, some felt that as teachers gained confidence in their abilities they were given more responsibility and a wider range of tasks.

*Planning and liaison*

- There was some evidence that the proportion of classroom assistants having regular meetings with teachers out of class time was reducing over time.
- By September 2001, less than half of classroom assistant respondents and only a third of teachers believed they had sufficient time to discuss their work together. Others reported that communication was rushed and lacked depth.
- Experience of working together and the use of written plans helped classroom assistants work more effectively with teachers.

*In-school support and training*

- The most common sources of in-school support for classroom assistants were provided by class teachers and occasional progress meetings with headteachers or classroom assistant co-ordinators.
- Many classroom assistants thought that support from class teachers and more experienced classroom assistants was the best form of support.

# 5: Impact of the Initiative

## 5.1 Introduction

This section looks at the impact of the Initiative on the work of teachers and pupils. It draws upon evidence from both national surveys and also the six case-study schools. The section concludes with respondents' views about the most important contribution made by classroom assistants, their satisfaction with the Initiative and their concerns.

## 5.2 Impact on teachers

### *5.2.1 Working relationships with classroom assistants*

In the first survey in 2000, the majority of both teachers and classroom assistants reported that they found it easy to work together. Some pointed out that it could take a little time to adjust to each other, but few real difficulties emerged. By September 2001, teachers and classroom assistants had had more time to get to know each other. Only one-third (36%) of teacher respondents were working with classroom assistants who were new to them that term; even fewer (16%) were allocated new appointees. And of these newly appointed classroom assistants, a half had already established contact with the school as parent helpers or in other supporting roles.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, in the second survey most teachers and classroom assistants reported that they had good working relationships. Two-thirds (67%) of the class teachers thought that relationships with classroom assistants had been good from the start, and another fifth (19%) indicated that their relationships had started well and were developing further with time. A number of the teachers highlighted the importance of continuity:

> *It has been invaluable to have the same person working with me over 3 years. Her confidence and abilities have developed as we have come to know each other better.*
>
> (CT)

Some teachers acknowledged that developing good relationships was a two-way process:

> *Taking time to adjust: classroom assistant to class, myself to having another body available.*
>
> (CT)

Classroom assistants were similarly positive about working relationships; almost two-thirds (63%) reported that these had been good from the start, and most of the others (28%) said they had started well and were developing further. None reported that there had been difficulties, although a few (7%) said that it took time to establish relationships, especially when working with a number of teachers:

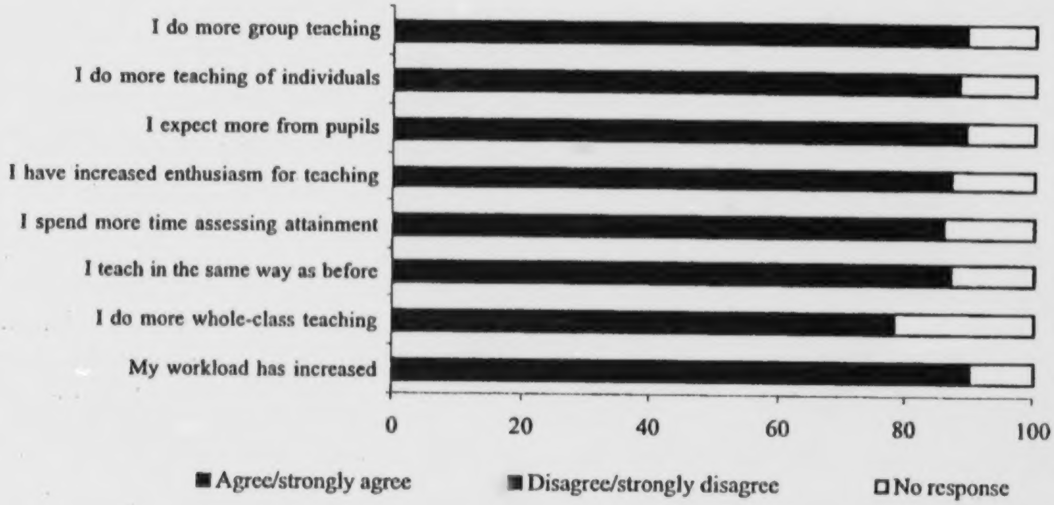
> *All teachers work in different ways. It takes a while to get to know their individual methods. It also takes time for the individual teachers to get to know you and to know how much responsibility you are capable of handling.*
>
> (CA)

> *Some teachers are very good at allocating work and others not sure or comfortable with CA in the class.*
>
> (CA)
>
> *I believe that the school had a bad experience with a previous CA and I've had to show that I'm capable of completing any task given.*
>
> (CA)

### *5.2.2 Impact on teaching approaches used*

Teachers identified a number of ways in which classroom assistants had affected their teaching practices. (See Figure 5.1 below.) These were virtually identical in both 2000 and 2001.

*Figure 5.1: Teachers' views of the impact of classroom assistants on aspects of teaching*



The biggest practical impact has been on the amount of time teachers are able to devote to working with individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers' perceptions have also changed: many agreed that they now expected more from their pupils and had more enthusiasm for teaching as a consequence. Approximately 40% spent more time assessing attainment and a few indicated that they undertake more whole-class teaching. In contrast some teachers reported that they still taught in the same way as before introduction of classroom assistants. However, very few teachers felt that their workload had significantly increased as a result of working with a classroom assistant.

### *5.2.3 Changes in teacher time use*

The Classroom Assistant Initiative has affected the way teachers use their time. Initially teachers reported that they were able to devote more time to planning and managing learning as they delegated preparing resources and other routine tasks, such as taking the register and collecting money, to classroom assistants. Some teachers also reported a reduction in the time they spent handling discipline and pastoral care.

By 2001, a half of teacher respondents (52%) agreed with the statement: 'I am able to spend "quality" teaching time with groups and individuals', while only 6% chose: 'I spend more time teaching when the classroom assistant is supporting me'. Thus the quality, rather than the quantity, of teaching time is perceived as the key change. Significantly, only one teacher thought that she spent 'as much or more time organising the classroom assistant as [she] gain[ed]'; and a quarter (26%) reported that: '*My* time has not changed, but the pupils get more support'.

## 5.3 Impact on pupils

### *5.3.1 Relationships between classroom assistants and pupils*

Headteachers, teachers and classroom assistants all agreed that good relationships had developed between classroom assistants and pupils by the time of the first survey. This perception was confirmed by pupils and their parents. Relationships were described as 'firm', 'respectful', 'professional', 'friendly', 'encouraging', 'supportive', 'caring' and 'sensitive'. While some classroom assistants needed a little time to develop appropriate relationships with pupils, few serious problems were reported.

By the time of the second survey, three-quarters (76%) of classroom assistants reported that their relationships with pupils were 'very good – friendly but firm'; the rest indicated that their relationships were 'developing – occasional problems, eg with cheeky pupils'. Those classroom assistants whose relationships with pupils were still 'developing' were often, but not exclusively, new appointees. None of the sample of classroom assistants reported any serious difficulties relating to pupils, and class teachers and headteachers echoed this pattern closely. Only two of the 74 headteachers in 2001 reported that they had a classroom assistant whom they felt had difficulty relating to pupils.

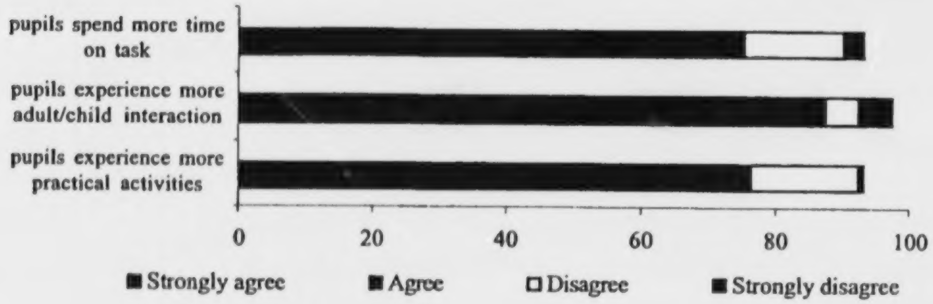
### *5.3.2 Impact on behaviour and motivation*

Views on the extent to which classroom assistants were having an impact on pupils' behaviour and motivation were mixed. Headteachers tended to be more positive about this than teachers. Almost half of teacher respondents thought there had been an impact on pupil behaviour, although more believed that pupil motivation had improved. No major changes in opinion were evident during the evaluation, although the teachers' views were slightly more positive by 2001. In Appendix 5, the headteacher of School B believed the classroom assistant had little impact on pupil behaviour, whereas in School F this was a prime focus of the classroom assistant role.

### *5.3.3 Impact on pupil experiences in class*

Throughout the evaluation, respondents were more positive about the effect classroom assistants were having on pupils' learning experiences than they were about the impact on behaviour and motivation. Most class teachers agreed that when a classroom assistant was present, pupils spent more time on task, and experienced more practical activities and adult/child interaction. (See Figure 5.2 below.)

*Figure 5.2: Class teachers' views of the impact of classroom assistants on pupil experiences*



*Range of learning experiences*

In both 2000 and 2001, most class teachers detected improvements in the range of learning experiences offered to pupils: 57% felt there had been some improvement and 20% a great improvement. In contrast, headteachers were more likely to say there had been a great improvement than simply some improvement.

*Participation in activities*

Views on the impact of classroom assistants on pupils' participation in activities changed little over the period. Most teachers and headteachers thought there had been some or even a great improvement.

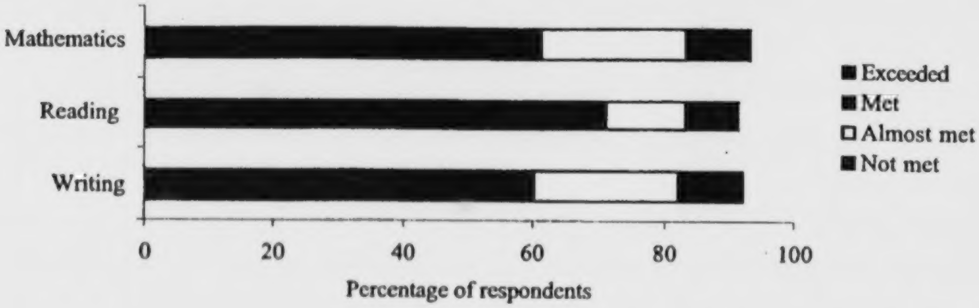
A number of the case studies in Appendix 5 provide illustrative examples of ways in which classroom assistants are having an impact on pupil experiences in class.

### 5.3.4 Impact on attainment

*Performance against attainment targets and classroom assistants*

During both stages of the evaluation, we received little performance data from schools with which pupil progress could be compared. The data we did receive was often accompanied with comments to the effect that many factors were influencing pupil attainment and disaggregating these was difficult. Nevertheless, respondents tried to identify the factors which had affected pupil attainment during the period 1998-2001. As Figure 5.3 illustrates, the majority of schools participating in this evaluation met or almost met their targets, thus improving pupils' attainment in mathematics, reading and writing from 1998 to 2001.

*Figure 5.3: Performance against attainment targets set for June 2001*



Early Intervention and the Classroom Assistant Initiative were each identified as important influences on attainment by approximately half of the education authority respondents. Headteachers suggested that a wide range of factors had influenced attainment in their schools, of which better approaches to teaching and learning, the Classroom Assistant Initiative and whole-school awareness of target setting were the only ones identified by more than ten individuals. Thus classroom assistants are seen as contributing to raised standards, but as one headteacher put it, they are only 'one part of a bigger picture'.

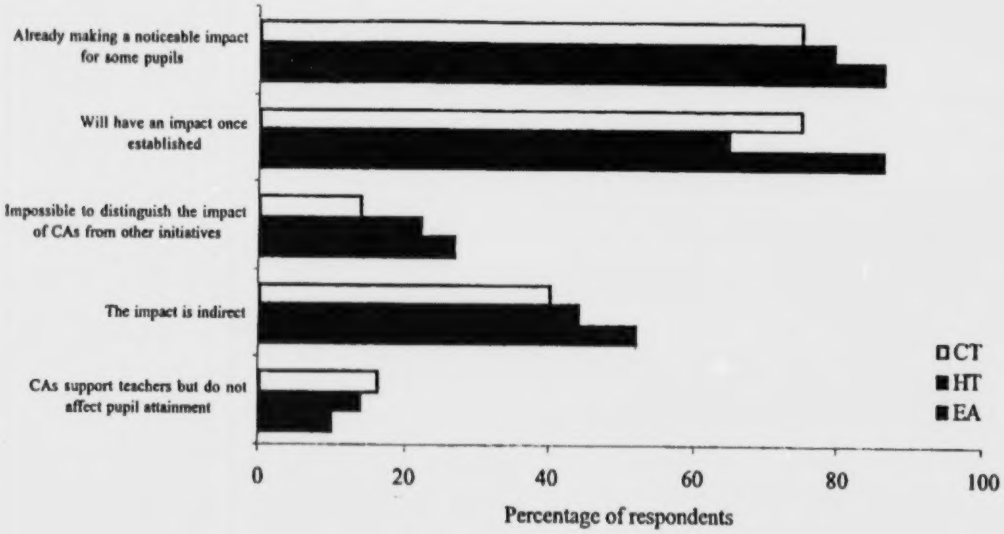
It is important not to overstate any apparent links between success in meeting attainment targets and use of classroom assistants. However, there was some evidence of good performance against attainment targets in five authorities in which it was a priority to deploy classroom assistants to support large composite classes. No other discernible patterns emerged at authority level.

Reading standards improved in many schools. And although improvements cannot be attributed solely to the additional support provided by classroom assistants, a main aspect of their role was to reinforce reading skills. But it should be noted that reading standards also rose in some schools that did not have classroom assistants. Furthermore, other Initiatives, most notably Early Intervention, will also have contributed to improvements in reading. Improvements were less marked in writing and mathematics – both areas which receive less attention from classroom assistants.

### *Perceptions of the impact of classroom assistants on attainment*

Education authority representatives, headteachers and class teachers, all held very similar views about the impact of classroom assistants on pupils' attainment. (See Figure 5.4.)

*Figure 5.4: Proportions of respondents agreeing with statements about the impact of classroom assistants on pupil attainment*



Most respondents agreed (many strongly) that classroom assistants were already having a noticeable impact on the attainment of some pupils. The majority also believed that classroom assistants would have an impact on attainment more generally in due course. However, approximately half suggested that the impact made by classroom assistants was indirect because they enabled teachers to spend more time teaching. Nevertheless, fewer than one fifth of the respondents agreed with a statement that classroom assistants support teachers but do not affect pupil attainment. Comments from headteachers in the case study schools confirmed that such views are currently based on impressions rather than solid evidence:

> *While we do feel that the introduction of classroom assistants has had an impact on attainment in the school, there is, as yet, no real evidence to back that up.*
>
> (HT)

Nevertheless only one-third of respondents agreed that 'it is not possible to distinguish the impact of classroom assistants from that of other Initiatives'. Our respondents appear to be more confident of the impact of classroom assistants when not required to tie this to performance data. This may in part be because they have doubts about the validity of the performance data, as this critique from one headteacher illustrates:

> *Reading attainment improved last year but decreased again this year…It is a problem with such small numbers. The one child in Primary 4 who did attain the appropriate level actually passed the test by using strategies such as word matching. He couldn't actually read the words or understand some of the text therefore I decided not to award the level.*
>
> (HT)

### *5.3.5 Pupils' and parents' views*

A sample of the views of pupils in the case-study schools is presented here. Pupils were interviewed using digital photographs of observed activities with classroom assistants as 'visual prompts'. (Further details are provided in Appendix 5.) Two hundred parents of pupils in the observation classes were surveyed.

*Pupils' views*

There were no obvious changes in the views pupils expressed from one visit to the next. Some of the main points emerging from the pupil discussions were that:

- classroom assistants had an impact on pupils' attitudes and motivation. Pupils described working with them as 'fun' and were eager for their 'turn' with the classroom assistant.
- classroom assistants helped pupils with their work and pupils pointed out that they helped them 'get started' by developing ideas with them.
- older pupils were aware of just how little time they actually spent with a classroom assistant.
- most pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of the difference between teachers and classroom assistants. They saw assistants as helpers.
- where classroom assistants had a substantial role out of class (eg in the playground) this was also welcomed by pupils.

*Parents' views*

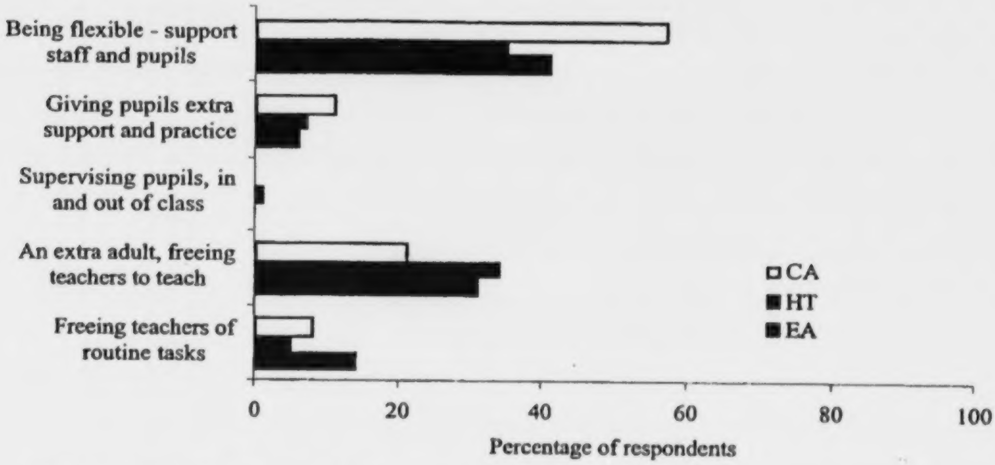
There was little change in parents' views in the two surveys, although we heard from considerably more on the second occasion. The main points emerging from the parent surveys were:

- parents were largely unaware of the role performed by classroom assistants in their children's classes.
- parents who knew more about the Classroom Assistant Initiative tended to be involved in the school as parent helpers.
- some parents acknowledged that they had received information from the school about classroom assistants, but many could not recall receiving it.
- parents who were aware of classroom assistants viewed them positively and reported that their children felt the some way.

## 5.4 Most important contribution of classroom assistants

Headteachers, education authority representatives and classroom assistants were asked to identify the most important contribution made by classroom assistants. Their responses follow a very similar pattern. (See Figure 5.5 below.)

*Figure 5.5: The most important contribution made by classroom assistants*



All three groups of stakeholders identified 'being flexible and willing to support staff and pupils as needed' and 'being an extra adult in class, freeing teachers to teach' as the most important contributions. Flexibility was rated most important by 35% of headteachers, 25% of education authority representatives, and 57% of classroom assistants; and being an extra adult by 34% of headteachers, 29% of education authority representatives, and 21% of classroom assistants.

## 5.5 Level of satisfaction with Initiative

### *5.5.1 Satisfaction with impact on workload*

Overall most stakeholders were satisfied with the Classroom Assistants Initiative. In autumn 2000 the vast majority of class teacher, headteacher and education authority respondents were very satisfied, and only three respondents reported any dissatisfaction. By September 2001 satisfaction levels had declined; slightly larger numbers of respondents were dissatisfied, most of whom were class teachers. In addition, there was a reduction in the number who were very satisfied with the impact of the Initiative on workload and time for teaching.

Class teachers were overwhelmingly (86%) satisfied with the impact of the Initiative on their own workload and time for teaching. However, many who were satisfied indicated that they would nevertheless welcome more time with a classroom assistant. Less than one in ten (9%) of teacher respondents expressed any dissatisfaction, and of these only 2% were not at all satisfied. The reasons include:

- interruptions or the non-appearance of classroom assistants at scheduled times
- insufficient training for classroom assistants; and
- classroom assistants who undertook largely clerical/administrative tasks which left little time for support for learning.

Only one headteacher indicated that he or she was 'not very satisfied' and none selected 'not at all satisfied'. Half the headteachers (51%) reported that they were very satisfied with the impact of the Initiative on their teachers' workload and time for teaching. Few headteachers gave reasons for their degree of satisfaction with the Initiative; of those who did, most reflected the teachers' view that more time or classroom assistants were needed.

Education authority responses closely echoed those of the headteachers.

### *5.5.2 Satisfaction with impact on learning experiences of pupils*

Even more (89%) of teacher respondents were satisfied with the impact of the Initiative on the learning experiences of their pupils. Again responses were evenly divided between those who were very satisfied (45%) and those who were somewhat satisfied (44%). No teachers were 'not at all satisfied' with this aspect of the Initiative, and only 4% were 'not very satisfied'.

Headteachers and education authorities again echoed these responses.

## 5.6 Concerns about the Initiative

Although satisfaction with the Initiative was still high in 2001, it had fallen slightly since 2000. A number of concerns remained unresolved. These are discussed below.

### *5.6.1 Education Authorities*

In autumn 2000, education authority representatives reported concerns in three main areas:

- the funding of the Initiative, especially in the future
- training for classroom assistants; and
- the arrangements schools made to fund classroom assistants from their own devolved budgets.

By September 2001 issues related to funding and training were still unresolved. In addition, problems with the definition of the classroom assistant remit had surfaced.

*Funding and future developments*

A number of authorities were still unclear about the funding of the Initiative beyond March 2002. Others wondered how it would continue to develop: how could councils set aside sufficient funding for training as well as salaries; should the Initiative be extended into secondary schools; and how would supply cover and recruitment be handled when transferred from the authority to individual schools. These were all points raised by education authority representatives. In addition, one authority stated that it was looking forward to the impact of *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* when it thought that 'all schools will be required to have classroom assistants'.

*Training*

Another set of concerns related to training and career development. Staff development for teachers and headteachers was a specific issue for one authority, with an urgent call for the resource materials being developed with Executive funding; other authorities had also been waiting for these materials so that they could run courses based on them.

Some education authority representatives were unhappy about the nature of current training. One believed that the PDA was more suitable for training classroom assistants before they took up their appointments, and yet it was usually offered to experienced post-holders. The classroom assistants expressed a range of opinions about the usefulness of PDA training (see Section 3.4.2), from very positive to rather disparaging. It is not, therefore, clear from the information we have that the PDA content is inherently inappropriate for experienced classroom assistants. It may be that some providers are more successful than others in tailoring their delivery of the course to the experience of the participants.

Education authority representatives were also worried about the lack of career development and related salary pathways for classroom assistants.

*Remit*

Finally, the classroom assistant remit appeared as a new concern for some authority representatives. One believed that a more closely defined job description was needed to optimise the impact on children's learning, while another saw a need to rationalise the remits of the various non-teaching support staff now in schools. This need to rationalise supporting roles or to define the boundaries between them more clearly was raised by a number of respondents from other groups as well.

### *5.6.2 Headteachers*

In autumn 2000 headteachers' main concerns were twofold. They worried about:

- funding and training for their classroom assistants; and
- managing the boundaries between assistants' and teachers' roles.

A year on the issues remained the same, although the particulars reflected the changing context in schools.

*Funding and future developments*

Headteachers' biggest concern was that there was not sufficient classroom assistant support to meet their schools' needs. Some also wondered about how the Initiative would be funded in the future, and whether or not it would be withdrawn. Others highlighted a variety of issues. These included:

- the fairness of the distribution of classroom assistants to schools
- the reduction of other kinds of support to schools which had coincided with the introduction of classroom assistants

- the advisability of extending the Initiative to secondary schools, possibly eroding provision in primary schools.

Two headteachers pointed out that classroom assistant low pay could undermine the future of the Initiative, and another was unhappy about the lack of absence cover for classroom assistants, which she felt devalued the importance of their contribution.

*Training*

The lack of training and career development opportunities for classroom assistants was an issue for a number of headteachers. Some headteachers questioned the quality, appropriateness and timing of training provided in some authorities. One headteacher suggested that employing classroom assistants on provisional, probationary contracts would be prudent. These could be converted to permanent contracts upon satisfactory completion of an appropriate training period.

*Management of classroom assistants*

Several headteachers indicated that they would rather have a little extra time from qualified teachers than more time from classroom assistants. Some thought that the time required to manage classroom assistants, define their remits, organise their timetable and generally troubleshoot, was almost more trouble than it was worth. However, headteachers without classroom assistants said they would welcome the opportunity to have one, and one headteacher believed that not all teachers were using them to the fullest.

### *5.6.3 Class teachers*

In autumn 2000 class teachers were primarily concerned about the classroom assistants' remit, with fewer teachers raising issues related to the allocation of classroom assistants' time. By September 2001 more teachers identified time allocation as a problem. Training was an issue for only a few teachers in each survey.

*Allocation of time*

By 2001 teachers were familiar with what classroom assistants do and their main concern was to acquire more time with assistants. Some were dissatisfied with the way classroom assistant time was allocated within their school because it did not fit in with the pupils' day, or because classroom assistants spent too much time on duties outwith the classroom. Others were still unhappy about the lack of planning/liaison time. A few complained that the distribution of classroom assistants among schools appeared unfair, with apparently similar schools having quite different amounts of classroom assistant support. And teachers without classroom assistant support thought that they were missing out on something valuable. Others were worried that in future the provision of classroom assistants would be reduced or discontinued, once the Initiative had run its course.

*Remit*

Some teachers still thought that the classroom assistant's role was not sufficiently well defined. This could create tension between teachers and classroom assistants. By 2001 there were still a few teachers who indicated that they would prefer to teach with other qualified teachers because less time was required for communication, liaison and timetabling than when working with classroom assistants.

*Training*

Teachers expressed a variety of concerns about the training of classroom assistants. One teacher thought that minimum requirements in English and mathematics were too low and pointed to the effect that this might have on pupils. Another recognised the tension between the desire to recruit more classroom assistants and the need to ensure that appointees were suitably qualified and trained. Yet another suggested that classroom assistants should be trained before they took up their posts in a similar way to nursery nurses. Some indicated that the limited availability of courses for classroom assistants was placing an unacceptable burden on teachers as they had to fill the gaps themselves by training their own assistants through on-the-job training.

The concerns of the classroom assistants were reported in Section 2.4.3, and included low pay, lack of career development opportunities and the lack of time to provide all the support schools needed. Some were anxious about the remit, or felt undervalued or excluded.

## 5.7 Summary of findings

*Impact on teachers*

- By September 2001 most teachers had gained some experience of working with classroom assistants, and many were supported by assistants with whom they had worked in previous years.
- Relationships between classroom assistants and teachers were generally perceived to be good from the outset, and these improved over time.
- During the evaluation teachers' perceptions of the main impact made by classroom assistants remained constant. They believed that classroom assistants enabled them to concentrate on teaching individuals and groups and to expect more from pupils. They also spent less time preparing resources, and on routine tasks such as registration and on handling discipline and pastoral care.
- Most teachers were able to use the time 'freed-up' by classroom assistants to devote more of their own time to teaching, planning and managing learning; half of the teacher respondents believed they had more 'quality' teaching time as a consequence of classroom assistant support. However, a quarter of the teachers reported that their own time use had not changed, but that their pupils got more support.

*Impact on pupils*

- Relationships between classroom assistants and pupils were reported as good throughout the Initiative.
- Headteachers, and to a slightly lesser degree teachers, felt that classroom assistants had improved pupils' motivation, and in some cases their behaviour as well.
- The majority of teachers reported that when a classroom assistant was present pupils spent more time on task and experienced more practical activities and interaction with an adult.
- Many schools and authorities believed that the Classroom Assistants Initiative, along with Early Intervention, were important influences in helping them meet or exceed their attainment targets in June 2001.
- By September 2001 respondents were more confident than earlier in the evaluation that improvements in the attainment of some pupils could be attributed to classroom assistants.
- Approximately half the respondents (class teachers, headteachers and authority representatives) believed that classroom assistants were affecting attainment indirectly by 'freeing up' more teacher time.
- Pupils themselves enjoyed working with classroom assistants and appreciated the extra support in the class and elsewhere in school. They clearly distinguished between classroom assistants, whom they saw as 'helpers', and teachers.

*Impact on parents*

- In general parents demonstrated a relatively low level of awareness of classroom assistants and their role. Exceptions were parents who were closely involved with schools, for example as helpers.
- All the parents' comments about their own experience of classroom assistants or what they had heard from their children were positive.

*Overall impact*

- Overall, education authority representatives, headteachers and classroom assistants believed that the most important contribution of classroom assistants was their flexibility in supporting both teachers and pupils. Many also indicated that having an extra adult in class and freeing teachers to teach was important.
- In autumn 2000 most respondents were very satisfied with the Initiative and only three reported any dissatisfaction. By September 2001 more respondents, mostly teachers, were dissatisfied.

- Teachers' dissatisfaction was particularly associated with frequent interruptions or withdrawals of timetabled classroom assistant support from their classes, insufficient training of classroom assistants, and a shift in their remit from in-class support to administrative and supervisory duties.
- The main concerns identified by respondents remained focused on the same issues, namely funding and future developments of the Initiative, training, definition of the remit of classroom assistants and allocation of their time.

# 6: Discussion

## 6.1 Introduction

This final section of this report summarises key findings which emerge from the evaluation regarding:

- the impact of the Classroom Assistant Initiative on pupils' attainment
- the utilisation of teachers' time; and
- the learning experiences of pupils.

It highlights a number of issues which concerned respondents and indicates which of those issues might benefit from continued monitoring.

## 6.2 Did pupils' attainment improve?

One of the main questions which the evaluation addressed was whether the Classroom Assistants Initiative led to improvements in pupil performance. The answer is a qualified 'yes'. We can say that by June 2001 attainment had risen in many of the schools participating in the evaluation, as they met or exceeded their targets. However, as relatively few schools provided us with detailed information about performance, we have been unable to determine any difference in performance between the few schools in our sample which did not have classroom assistants and the majority that did.

In addition, a number of our respondents pointed out that it was too early to attribute any changes in pupils' attainment to the presence of classroom assistants. It is important to remember that some of these schools had only had an assistant for one of the three years covered by the target-setting exercise. Also, with so many different policies aimed at raising standards being implemented concurrently by schools, it is difficult for anyone to disaggregate the impact of each. However, in September 2001 education authority representatives reported, as they had the previous year, that Early Intervention and the Classroom Assistant Initiative were important influences on attainment. Headteachers also believed that the Classroom Assistant Initiative affected attainment, along with better approaches to teaching and learning and whole-school awareness of target setting.

Respondents also thought that classroom assistants were having a noticeable impact on the attainment of certain pupils. Other evidence, especially from the case studies, indicates that supported reinforcement of learning by classroom assistants was beginning to benefit individuals and small groups of pupils. It is clear that teachers working alone would have been unable to provide such opportunities for the reinforcement of individual learning. This finding articulates well with evidence from other studies on class size (reported in Wilson, 2001) which highlight the importance for children, especially those in the early stages, to have at least some one-to-one contact with an adult during the school day.

If many respondents thought it was too early to ascribe benefits to the presence of classroom assistants, many were confident that classroom assistants would make an impact on attainment in the future, once they were established. Approximately half the respondents believed that classroom assistants' impact on attainment was indirect and that by 'freeing-up' teacher time, they enabled teachers to raise attainment. The impact of classroom assistants on teacher time is discussed more fully in Section 6.3.

*Different approaches to deployment*

The implementation guidance accompanying the Initiative envisaged a broad and flexible role for classroom assistants, allowing authorities and schools to use them to support particular needs and priorities. This they have done. Some general trends do emerge (for instance, the concentration of most classroom assistants' time on support for pupils in the classroom) but it was not possible to identify discernible patterns of deployment in groups of schools or authorities. Together with the limited information available about the sample schools' performance, this has hindered the identification of a single most effective way of deploying classroom assistants.

## 6.3 How did the Initiative impact on teachers' use of time?

Did the Classroom Assistant Initiative affect the way teachers utilise their time? Again, we believe the answer is 'yes'. The findings reported here must be taken with some caution because they are based upon respondents' perceptions of changes in teachers' use of their time resulting from the Classroom Assistant Initiative, and it was not possible to collect 'before and after' data as the evaluation was commissioned after the Initiative was already underway. Nevertheless, most respondents reported that classroom assistants spend the largest proportion of their time supporting teachers in the classroom. They offer support for individual pupils and relieve teachers of routine tasks, such as registration, and handling discipline and pastoral care. This in turn has reduced the amount of time teachers themselves now need to spend on such activities. It is noteworthy that a relatively small input of classroom assistant time to these activities appears to have produced a considerable positive impact on teachers' perceptions of their workload.

It is important to note that role relationships are not static and some respondents reported that, in response to *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, classroom assistants were now being asked to spend more time on routine tasks. Teachers feared that this would reduce further the available time in which they and assistants could work together within the classroom. There is some evidence that this is already happening. Some respondents complain that classroom assistants now have less time to support pupils and are in danger of under-utilising the skills they have acquired from working directly with pupils. It is not clear whether this shift in the balance of the classroom assistant's role will remain confined to a small number of schools, or be more widely adopted elsewhere in the future.

A quarter of the teachers reported that their own time had not been affected, because most of the classroom assistant time was spent working with pupils. However, most teachers identified benefits to themselves as well as to their pupils. They believed that the quality of their teaching had improved, particularly because they were able to concentrate more when working with individuals and groups, secure in the knowledge that other pupils were being supervised and kept on task by the classroom assistant.

Few teachers thought that working with a classroom assistant had increased their workload overall. However, some wished that their classroom assistants had had more training before they started work; these teachers commented that they had to provide a great deal of support and explanation of tasks. Many teachers and classroom assistants were concerned about the lack of time for discussion without pupils present. This is discussed more fully below.

## 6.4 Has the Initiative changed classroom practices?

Undoubtedly relationships within many classrooms have changed as a consequence of the presence of classroom assistants. Most respondents reported that relationships between classroom assistants, teachers and pupils were very good; this remained constant throughout the evaluation period. It was helped by the fact that many classroom assistants were familiar faces in the schools in which they were employed. Some had been parent helpers or undertaken other paid employment prior to their appointment as classroom assistants. However, a number of respondents pointed out that it usually took time for teachers and classroom assistants to get to know each other, in order to find the most effective match between the skills and personality of the classroom assistant, the expectations of the teacher, and the needs of the pupils. The overall perception was that the more time they spent together, the more effective working relationships became.

We have already mentioned in passing a number of the ways in which classroom assistants are affecting pupils' learning and classroom experiences. They help pupils stay on task and achieve more while the teacher is working with others, and they provide supported reinforcement through games and activities. They also enable teachers to offer a wider range of practical and interactive learning experiences, by supervising groups of pupils engaged in such tasks. As well as the impact on attainment discussed above, many respondents believed that classroom assistants were contributing to improvements in pupils' motivation, confidence and self-esteem. In some cases the role of a classroom assistant in supervising pupils outside the classroom, for example in the playground, made an important contribution to good relationships and pupil behaviour.

## 6.5 Other issues

In the interim report (Schlapp *et al*, 2001) we raised a number of issues which merited further attention. We suggested that some might disappear as teachers and assistants gained more experience of working together, but that others might need to be resolved through changes in working practices. These issues are discussed in turn below.

### *Is the classroom assistant's role clear?*

For the most part, we believe that the classroom assistant's role is clear. By September 2001, most headteachers reported that uncertainties about the role of their classroom assistants had been resolved. Even so, many teachers would appreciate advice about what constitutes 'good practice' in the use of classroom assistants. The broad and flexible nature of the role, which we believe is its strength, does constitute a difficulty for others. For example, some teachers feel unsure about how to apportion their classroom assistant's time. Others thought that the time classroom assistants spent on more general support in the school, or with colleagues who utilised them differently to the ways *they* used them, was a waste of the classroom assistant's skills.

Most of the survey respondents, on both occasions, indicated that the main focus of the classroom assistant role is to support learning within the classroom. However, in the second survey there were signs of a shift in some schools. Classroom assistants were being asked to spend more time on support and administration tasks in response to *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*. If this trend becomes more widespread it may affect the morale and commitment of classroom assistants, many of whom are motivated largely by their work with pupils. If the intrinsic nature of the post changes with no concomitant increase in wages, recruitment may be affected.

Some schools and authorities have general auxiliaries who carry out administrative tasks such as photocopying and managing resources. At least one authority considered a two-tier system for classroom assistants at the pilot stage of the Initiative, some of whom would carry out the more routine tasks, while those who had relevant qualifications and experience would support pupils' learning. However, there is little evidence at present of authorities operating a pay structure that distinguishes between classroom assistants on the basis of their skills or experience. Relating classroom assistants' pay to the actual demands and responsibilities of each post has been mooted in England, where one authority has negotiated an extended pay structure. This takes greater account of assistants' skills and experience and rewards them accordingly. This may influence the expectations of classroom assistants in Scottish schools in future. Again it could have an effect on recruitment.

### *Is there time for planning and liaison?*

All stakeholders agreed that planning and liaison were necessary, but the amount of time available varied. Some authorities included planning time in the classroom assistants' contracts, and some schools had created time within the school day by providing cover for planning meetings. However, many teachers and assistants had no time set aside for meeting without the pupils present.

During the course of the evaluation, there was evidence of a reduction in the number of classroom assistants having regular planning meetings with teachers.

Less than half of classroom assistant respondents and only a third of teachers thought that they had enough opportunities to discuss their work together. Those who had worked together for some time reported that they developed a 'shorthand' for their communications, often using a combination of written instructions and snatched conversations. However, respondents pointed out a number of disadvantages resulting from the lack of designated planning time. These included:

- concerns that time spent assigning and explaining tasks to assistants in class was time when neither teacher nor assistant was working with the pupils
- a belief that much more could be achieved if there was time for in-depth discussion and planning together.

Some classroom assistants did, however, show great dedication and stayed beyond their contracted hours in order to liaise with teachers. For others this was impossible due to family commitments. In addition, some teachers, made more aware of their contractual hours by *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, thought that time spent with the classroom assistant could have been better spent on the teachers' other duties. The provision of designated planning time is clearly an issue that many schools have not yet satisfactorily resolved.

*How have timetabling problems been resolved?*

As the Initiative progresses, the general trend is for classroom assistants to work with fewer classes. Therefore during the evaluation, the amount of support received by individual teachers has increased: most respondents seem content with this change. However, there are still teachers who receive less than an hour of support from classroom assistants per week, and indeed some who receive none at all.

In some schools classroom assistants have such a range of responsibilities that they struggle to fit them into their contract hours. Many teachers have also experienced the occasional frustration of a scheduled classroom assistant not appearing or being called away to perform other duties. This disrupts the activities planned and is a potential source of tension between teachers and classroom assistants. For some teachers this disruption was frequent enough that they no longer planned activities that relied on the classroom assistant's presence. This clearly limits the range of activities offered to pupils and also the types of tasks given to assistants. In some schools a reorganisation of priorities and timetables might help to resolve such difficulties. However, a number of respondents believed that the amount of classroom support is still insufficient to cover all the needs of their schools.

*Is there appropriate training?*

The amount and type of training available to classroom assistants varies considerably across Scotland, as does its quality and relevance. Most classroom assistants have been offered some form of training, but for many it has only been on an occasional basis. Education authorities usually organise and fund the training, but in some cases schools and classroom assistants have had to pay for it. Some classroom assistants, who are employed for only a few hours per week, did not think that they were entitled to any training. It appears that some headteachers may have this misapprehension too. Long-serving classroom assistants who were appointed before training became available sometimes found that more recently appointees were sent on courses while they were told that they no longer needed any. There are, therefore, outstanding issues for authorities to address concerning the provision of training for all their classroom assistants.

Many respondents recognise that teachers also need training if they are to work effectively with classroom assistants. We believe that the delay in providing support materials for teachers may have contributed to the continuing uncertainty which some express. What constitutes 'good practice' was an issue where many teachers indicated they would like more advice. To some extent The Staff Development Package for teachers (University of Strathclyde/SEED, 2001), which was distributed to authorities in September 2001, may meet this need. A number of authorities indicated that they were planning development activities for teachers based on this material later in the 2001/2002 session. It might be useful to evaluate its use and to identify any remaining gaps in the provision of support for those working with classroom assistants.

### *Are classroom assistants included in whole-school development activities?*

In our interim report (Schlapp *et al,* 2001), we indicated that some classroom assistants felt excluded from staff rooms and whole-school development activities. This problem seemed to be less prevalent by September 2001. Although many classroom assistants were involved in playground supervision and therefore did not share their breaks with teachers, there were fewer comments in the second survey about not feeling part of the team. Despite this, we know that few assistants regularly attended whole-school meetings: many more participated in in-service days, and were kept informed about school matters by headteachers, mentors or classroom assistant co-ordinators. These arrangements, coupled with the greater length of time classroom assistants had been in schools, appear to have been sufficient in most cases to overcome initial feelings of exclusion. Many of the classroom assistants reported that they were welcomed by their schools and made to feel valued members of staff.

### *How will the Initiative develop in the future?*

Overall, classroom assistants were highly satisfied with their jobs. This suggests that many are likely to stay in their posts for some time, unless outside circumstances dictate otherwise. However, it is worth noting that assistants' satisfaction levels declined during the evaluation. Authorities and schools may wish to consider what steps they can take to motivate and retain experienced classroom assistants. There were signs that the number of suitable applicants for classroom assistant posts in some areas had fallen in the latest round of recruitment.

There are, of course, other support staff within schools and this can give rise to problems of role definition and clarity. By the end of the evaluation some thought that the distinction between the roles of classroom assistants and SEN auxiliaries had been eroded. This may have resulted partly from many former SEN auxiliaries becoming classroom assistants. One authority had merged the budgets for these two roles by September 2001, leaving schools to organise the practicalities of allocating duties. However, other authorities and schools wanted to keep the two roles separate and indicated that the skills and training required for each are distinct.

We raise this matter for two reasons. Firstly, if different skills and training are required for each role, then authorities and schools need to ensure that applicants are matched to posts and that appropriate training is provided. Secondly, a number of authorities indicated that they were encountering difficulties filling SEN auxiliary posts. The classroom assistant posts are more attractive to applicants as they are often permanent while the SEN posts are usually temporary. If recruitment difficulties for SEN posts continue, it seems likely that schools will use classroom assistants to provide the missing support. By default the roles may merge, leaving classroom assistants with less time to provide the type of support that they have undertaken so far. It is precisely this support with groups and activities which teachers appreciate.

Other issues raised by our respondents about the future of classroom assistants include concerns about:

- authority funding for classroom assistants' training and salaries
- a possible extension of the Initiative into secondary schools which some think will impact adversely on provision in the primary sector
- redressing the uneven distribution of classroom assistants to schools perceived by some respondents
- rates of pay for classroom assistants, absence cover and the shift to more administrative tasks, which some respondents believe are undermining the value of the classroom assistant role.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In the third year of operation of the Classroom Assistant Initiative, the picture remained generally very positive. However, there were signs that satisfaction was a little less strong than it had been initially. Although many schools believed that they had successfully resolved initial implementation difficulties, a number of concerns remained.

The main conclusions of this evaluation follow.

- Attainment in Scottish primary schools has improved since the Classroom Assistant Initiative was launched. However, in the context of multiple policy Initiatives aimed at raising attainment it is not possible to quantify the specific contribution of classroom assistants to this improvement.

- Classroom assistants were widely perceived to contribute to raising pupil attainment by enabling teachers to teach more effectively, and through their own work with individuals and groups of pupils.
- Classroom assistants were relieving teachers of many routine tasks and this support made a positive impact on teachers' perceptions of their workload. However, most classroom assistants spent more time supporting pupils, keeping them on task, providing additional support and reinforcement, and supervising them in a wide range of activities.
- A number of teachers were still uncertain about how best to balance the allocation of classroom assistants' time between routine tasks and support for pupils. In some cases this caused dissatisfaction, usually because the classroom assistants preferred to spend more time with pupils than undertaking administrative duties. There was evidence that influences such as recommendations in *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* were shifting the balance of the job from pupils to administration in some schools. This issue may benefit from further attention.
- Many schools were still finding it difficult to make sufficient time available for teachers and classroom assistants to discuss and plan their work together. There was a perception that the benefits would justify the time spent.
- Respondents believed some classroom assistants were stretched so far that they were not always able to meet all the expectations of their schools. A number of authorities and schools believed that more classroom assistant support than the Initiative has thus far provided was required, if all schools are to benefit fully.
- The amount of training provided for classroom assistants has increased considerably during the course of the evaluation, especially since the launch of the PDA: Classroom Assistants. However, opportunities were not available uniformly across the country, and not all training needs were being met.
- The package of support materials for teachers working with classroom assistants became available just as the evaluation was coming to an end, so that we were unable to judge whether it was addressing teachers' uncertainties about best practice in the use of classroom assistants. It might therefore be useful to explore this issue further. Teachers and headteachers also indicated that meetings with staff from other schools would be helpful as these would allow them to share their ideas about best practice.
- One authority had merged classroom assistant and SEN auxiliary roles and budgets; blurring of the boundaries between these roles was also evident elsewhere. Other authorities may choose to formalise this. We believe that this may result in less time being available for classroom assistants to undertake the activities that have led our respondents to regard this Initiative as such a success. This issue is another that would benefit from continued monitoring.

- Some respondents, especially education authority representatives and headteachers, still have concerns about the future provision and funding of the Classroom Assistant Initiative in Scottish primary schools.

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# Appendix 1: Background

## Introduction

In this appendix we set the current research study in context by outlining the main points to emerge from the published research on classroom assistants.

### *Are classroom assistants a new type of support?*

The use of an 'extra pair of hands' in the classroom is not a new phenomenon. However, according to Clayton (1993), a variety of terms have been used to describe these post holders:

- 'auxiliaries'
- 'support staff'
- 'paraprofessionals'
- 'non-teaching staff'
- 'classroom assistants'
- 'special needs auxiliaries'; and
- 'learning support assistants'.

More recently, Adamson (1999) suggests that *teaching assistant* has become the most widely accepted term to describe support staff in schools in England. In contrast *classroom assistant* has been adopted in Scottish schools. Despite different nomenclature, common National Occupational Standards have been drawn up 'for all staff in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who work with teachers in classrooms supporting the learning process in primary, special and secondary schools' (LGNTO, 2001).

### *Early evidence*

Over thirty years ago the Plowden Report (1967) recommended that more support should be given to teachers. A few years later, Duthie (1970) surveyed primary teachers in Scottish schools. He identified a range of tasks, such as 'housekeeping', preparation of materials and supervision, that did not necessarily require a teacher's professional skill and training. By 1972 there were already 1160 classroom assistants in Scotland and the Scottish Education Department commissioned a feasibility study to evaluate their use (Kennedy and Duthie, 1975). Overall, teachers who took part in the study expressed initial concerns about the value of auxiliaries. Some feared that auxiliaries might engage in teaching; that teachers might be inhibited by the presence of another person in the classroom or that time spent in preparing and planning to work with an auxiliary would outweigh any advantages gained.

Despite these initial doubts, teachers in the study identified a number of benefits. These were:

- the amount of time teachers spent on in-class non-teaching duties was reduced.

- teachers were three times less likely to have their essential educational tasks interrupted.
- the time teachers had for working with individual pupils and with pupils in groups increased, as did the time for undertaking the essential teaching tasks of diagnosing, evaluating, planning, prescribing and instructing.
- teachers' routine preparation work out-of-class was reduced.

Kennedy and Duthie recommended that the optimum provision was one classroom assistant to every three teachers. However, despite the favourable conclusions, this study did not lead to any great increase in the numbers of auxiliaries in Scottish schools. Additional support tended to be provided by parent volunteers, who were welcomed into schools as a way of engaging them in their children's education.

### *Changes which led to increasing numbers of support staff*

Since the mid-1970s, the number of assistants in classrooms has, however, increased. This is mainly as a response to the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools. In addition, the introduction of devolved school budgets allowed headteachers to employ additional staff in accordance with their school's priorities. For example, Moyles and Suschitzky (1997b) found that headteachers in England were choosing to employ full-time classroom assistants where their budgets would otherwise have allowed them to employ only a part-time qualified teacher. As one headteacher explained 'we were allowed an additional 0.2 teacher but chose to employ a classroom assistant, which was more value for money' (p.24).

### *Recent studies of classroom assistants*

Although there has been no significant research into the use of classroom assistants in Scottish schools since the mid-1970s (Kennedy and Duthie, 1975), research has been undertaken in England. Studies conducted during the 1990s showed that most assistants were employed primarily to help individual pupils with special educational needs (SEN), rather than supporting teachers and their classes.

### *Who becomes a classroom assistant?*

In the past more focus was placed upon assistants' personal qualities than on their formal qualifications (McGarvey *et al*, 1996). In fact, Clayton (1990) reported that classroom assistants were almost entirely:

- older women, who were generally untrained for their particular role
- held few relevant qualifications; and
- had little experience of special needs.

In a slightly later study Fletcher-Campbell (1992) pointed out that classroom assistants 'could range from ex-dinner ladies...to people considering a career in teaching and exploring this by way of non-teaching assistance' (p.141). Finally, Moyles and Suschitzky (1997a) referred to assistants as 'Jills of all trades' – a term which encapsulates the multiplicity of tasks performed by them.

### *What is their role?*

The earlier studies cited above show how the role of SEN assistant has developed from working one-to-one with a child with special needs to supporting a special needs child within groups in a mainstream classroom. Many of these assistants did not have job descriptions, and those who did often found themselves undertaking a variety of tasks. Teachers also reported that they did not know exactly what to expect of them. This lack of role clarity could pose challenges for assistants, especially those who worked with several teachers, all of whom could have their own ideas about the role (Baskind and Thompson, 1995).

### *Shift from housekeeper to supporter of learning*

Over the past twenty-five years the role of the classroom assistant has continued to develop. Clayton (1993) points out that the major shift has been from care and housekeeping to 'substantial involvement in the learning process itself' (p.42). This remains, according to Moyles and Suschitzky (1997a), an 'unresolved dilemma'. Clayton (1993) goes on to explain how:

> despite their lack of training, qualifications and experience, many assistants undertake a wide range of duties including some of an educational nature for which they receive little preparation and advice. (p.33)

### *The changing classroom*

With the increase in the number of classroom assistants in primary schools, there has been a profound change in what has been called the 'ecology' of the classroom (Thomas, 1987). The traditional classroom, staffed by a single teacher, is rapidly disappearing in schools across the UK. It is being replaced by one in which teachers and other adults work together to meet pupils needs (Morgan *et al*, 1998). Some even argue that the unitary nature of the teaching profession is being broken down and been replaced by 'classroom teams' (McGarvey *et al*, 1996).

### *Teachers as team managers*

Classroom assistants inevitably add to the organisational responsibilities of class teachers on whom responsibility for supporting them largely falls (Fletcher-Campbell, 1992). However, few teachers have been trained or prepared for a role in people management. To overcome these difficulties, Moyles and Suschitzky (1997a) suggest that 'they (teachers) need in-service training in ways of leading classroom teams efficiently to maximise their own and the classroom assistants' work' (p.11). This is a point which is highlighted in this current study.

### *Need for staff development*

A variety of studies (eg, Kennedy and Duthie, 1975) highlight the importance of staff development to help teachers make best use of available support. But Swann and Loxley (1998) point out that teachers also need to play a role in training classroom assistants. They found that those who had been involved in training were more likely to change their classroom practices than those who had not. More recent research from the Early Intervention Initiative in Scotland reiterates the importance of staff development:

> As a resource, the cost of the additional staffing is significant, and it will be important to ensure that its value is fully exploited...Staff development, and on-going exploration of good practice and enhanced roles and contributions should be priorities. (Fraser *et al*, 2001, p.6)

It is worth noting here that all the most influential documents on classroom assistants have either assumed that training would be made available or stressed that it should be (eg, Plowden, 1967; Kennedy and Duthie, 1975; Warnock, 1978; and Balshaw, 1999). This is only just becoming a reality with the introduction of the Professional Development Award for classroom assistants.

### *Planning and liaison with teachers*

The guidelines for the deployment of classroom assistants in Scotland state that they should work 'under the direction and supervision of teachers' (SOEID, 1999a, p.1). This principle was made explicit in the National Occupational Standards for teaching/classroom assistants' (LGNTO, 2001).

> It is the teacher whose curriculum and lesson planning and day-to-day direction set the framework within which teaching/classroom assistants work. The teaching/classroom assistant works under the direction of the teacher, whether in the whole class or on their own with an individual or a small group of pupils. Teaching/classroom assistants, therefore, need to be fully briefed about the teacher's plans and intentions for teaching and learning and her/his contribution to these. Ideally, teaching/classroom assistants will be involved by teachers in their planning and preparation of the work. (p.5)

As we see in the current review, these two issues – planning and supervision – remained concerns for both teachers and classroom assistants.

### *Impact on adult:pupil ratio and attainment*

What impact does an extra adult in the classroom have on pupils' attainment? To date the evidence remains inconclusive (see Blatchford and Mortimore, 1994 and Wilson, 2001 for reviews). The Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STARS) project (Achilles *et al*, 1993) reported that the largest pupil gains were achieved in classes of one teacher to 15 pupils. Rather disappointingly, similar gains were not reported from regular-sized classes staffed by teachers and teaching assistants. Although no longitudinal data on the impact of classroom assistants on children's attainment in Scottish schools are available, a project on the effects of class size in reception classes in England is about to report (Blatchford *et al*, in press). However, despite the lack of evidence, many believe that classroom assistants are already contributing to improvements in attainment. The National Occupational Standards document suggests that:

> The valuable contribution made by well-managed and well-trained teaching/classroom assistants to raising pupil achievement in schools is widely recognised by teachers, parents, local and national government. (LGNTO, 2001, p.2)

## Summary

During the course of this review, we found some evidence to show that the role of the classroom assistant/auxiliary had developed over the past twenty-five years. However, few studies refer specifically to Scottish schools. The main points to emerge are as follows:

- Support for teachers is not a new phenomenon.
- During the past twenty-five years, teachers' helpers have been known by a variety of terms: *teaching assistant* and *classroom assistant* are now the preferred terms in England and Scotland respectively.
- Both teachers and classroom assistants believe that the role needs clarifying.
- While many suggest that the traditional classroom is disappearing, all accept that teachers remain responsible for overall planning and supervision of staff.
- When assistants were first introduced, teachers expressed initial doubts about the classroom assistants/auxiliaries' role. However, those teachers who worked with classroom assistants had more time for teaching and fewer interruptions than those without assistants.
- Studies highlight the need for both teachers and classroom assistants to be trained to help them work together effectively.
- Finally, evidence from the STARS project in Tennessee suggests that the best pupil attainment results are achieved by reducing class size to 1 teacher to 15 pupils. Similar gains were not achieved by deploying teaching assistants to work with class teachers in regular sized classes.

These issues have informed the current research on classroom assistants in Scotland.

# Appendix 2: Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions addressed by this study were as follows:

## Questions relating to the identity of classroom assistants

- Who are classroom assistants?
- From which groups have they been recruited?
- What qualifications/training or previous experiences do they possess?
- Are certain groups under-represented, eg males, members of ethnic minorities?
- How is demand for classroom assistants interacting with the supply and what effects does it seem to be having on the supply of nursery nurses in pre-school establishments?

## Questions relating to the deployment of classroom assistants in schools

- How are classroom assistants currently deployed and managed by Education Authorities/school and stage?
- Have distinctive patterns of deployment by Authority, school or stage emerged?

## Questions relating to the effects of classroom assistants

- How is the use of classroom assistants changing the teaching and learning dynamics within the classroom?
- Do teachers perceive that their own time is now better utilised?
- What effects, if any, has the use of classroom assistants had on behaviour, attitudes and attainment of pupils?
- Can the efficacy of their use be established and what suggestions for improvement can be made?

# Appendix 3: Methodology

| Time Scale | Method | Sample | Response rates |
|---|---|---|---|
| Throughout | literature review | Review of relevant literature on classroom assistants/auxiliaries/support for learning staff in the UK | |
| October 2000 | postal survey | 1 Education Authority representative in 32 Education Authorities | 88% |
| October 2000 | postal survey | National survey of primary schools<br>Sample included:<br>96 schools (3 x 32 Education Authorities)<br>Questionnaires completed by:<br>• Headteachers<br>• Classroom Assistants<br>• 2 teachers in each school | 77%<br>*<br>58% |
| November 2000 | case studies using digital cameras to identify 'critical incidents' by 'stimulated recall' | 6 case study schools in a variety of urban and rural locations<br>School rolls ranged from 30 to 400 pupils<br>Interviews in each school included:<br>• Headteacher or classroom assistant co-ordinator<br>• Class teacher<br>• Classroom Assistant<br>• 3–4 pupils | |
| November 2000 | survey of parents | 200 parents of children in case study schools | 28% |
| May 2001 | repeat case studies using digital cameras to aid interviews | 6 case study schools. Same sample as above | |
| May 2001 | survey of parents | 200 parents of children in case study schools | 52% |
| September 2001 | repeat postal survey | 1 Education Authority representative in 32 Education Authorities | 91% |
| September 2001 | repeat postal survey | National survey of same primary schools<br>Sample included:<br>• 96 schools (3 x 32 Education Authorities)<br>• Questionnaires completed by:<br>• Headteachers<br>• Classroom Assistants<br>• 2 teachers in each school | 77%<br>*<br>61% |

* Note that response rates for classroom assistants cannot be given as the number employed varied during the two years.

# Appendix 4: Annotated questionnaires

Annotated questionnaires from second round:

- Classroom Assistants
- Classroom Teachers
- Headteachers
- Education Authorities
- Parents

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# ANNOTATED

## Questionnaire for CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

## National Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

## Postal Survey 2001

131 Returns
(Percentages are of total number of respondents)

This questionnaire is the second in a research project to find out about the impact of the Classroom Assistants Initiative introduced by the Government in 1999. In this second survey we are particularly interested in changes taking place as classroom assistants become more established in schools.

Whether you participated in the survey last year or not, we do hope you will help us by completing this questionnaire; the views of classroom assistants are very important in this project. Please tick the boxes as indicated and add brief comments where appropriate. Your responses will be treated in confidence.

Thank you.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact Ursula Schlapp or Julia Davidson at SCRE on 0131 557 2944

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

## YOU

1. Are you: Female? **95%** Male? **4%**

2. Are you: under 25? **6%** 25-34? **12%** 35-44? **60%** 45-54? **16%** 55+? **2%**

3. Do you have any qualifications in childcare and/or education? *(Tick all that apply)*

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| SVQs | 14% | 46% |
| HNC or HND | 11% | 48% |
| SQA modules | 22% | 42% |
| Nursery Nurse | 12% | 47% |
| Teaching | 3% | 45% |
| Other *(please specify)* | 12% | 34% |

13% open responses

4. What other qualifications do you hold?

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| O or S grades | 86% | 5% |
| Highers | 52% | 16% |
| SVQs | 27% | 20% |
| HNC or HND | 11% | 25% |
| other FE | 15% | 24% |
| degree | 11% | 26% |
| post-graduate degree | 2% | 28% |

5. Please indicate when and where you have held any of the following school-based posts. *(Tick all that apply)*

| | Combining with CA post | In this school before a CA | In another school before a CA | Never held |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| parent helper | | 31% | 44% | 17% |
| general auxiliary | 1% | 8% | 8% | 38% |
| Special Needs auxiliary | 4% | 24% | 22% | 28% |
| Nursery Nurse | 1% | 2% | 7% | 43% |
| playground supervisor | 14% | 11% | 12% | 29% |
| other *(Please specify)* | 1% | 7% | 5% | 19% |

10% open responses

## THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT POST

6. When did you take up the post of classroom assistant?

| This session (Aug 2001) | Last session (Aug 2000 - June 2001) | Before (Aug 2000) |
|---|---|---|
| 27% | 33% | 41% |

7. How many hours per week do you work as a classroom assistant?

| | |
|---|---|
| Less than 1 hour | 0% |
| 1-5 hours | 1% |
| 6-10 hours | 2% |
| 11-15 hours | 12% |
| 16-20 hours | 5% |
| 21-25 hours | 36% |
| More than 25 hours | 44% |

8. (a) How many classes are you working with this term?

| No. of Classes | CA% |
|---|---|
| 1 | 13 |
| 2 | 15 |
| 3 | 31 |
| 4 | 16 |
| 5 | 12 |
| 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 2 |
| 8 | 3 |
| 9 | 2 |

(b) Please indicate below the number of classes at each stage, specifying any composite classes separately in the space provided.

| | CA% Number of classes 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | 29 | 14 | 1 | – |
| P2 | 25 | 9 | 1 | – |
| P3 | 26 | 7 | 2 | – |
| P4 | 26 | 10 | 1 | 1 |

| | CA% Number of classes 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| P5 | 23 | 8 | 3 |
| P6 | 25 | 8 | 2 |
| P7 | 22 | 10 | 2 |

No. composite classes

| CA % 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 61 | 21 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 1 |

9. (a) Have there been any substantial changes to your role this year as compared with last? (eg working at a different stage, given a new area of responsibility)

| Yes | 37% | No | 41% | New in post | 21% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

(b) If YES, please give brief details

37% open responses

## WHAT YOU DO

10. How much of your time is spent on each of the following? *(Tick one box in each row)*

| | Most of the time | Regular blocks of time | A little time | No time |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| supporting pupils' learning (e.g. practical activities, keep on task) | 48% | 41% | 11% | 0% |
| supporting teachers on routine tasks (e.g. photocopying, displays, resources) | 22% | 46% | 28% | 2% |
| planning and liaising with teachers (without pupils present) | 3% | 15% | 54% | 25% |
| playground supervision | 15% | 47% | 21% | 16% |
| socio-emotional and practical support (e.g. in class, cloakroom, on trips) | 15% | 26% | 57% | 0% |
| specific responsibility (e.g. resource area, ICT support) | 5% | 29% | 47% | 17% |
| other school duties (e.g. first aid, general administration) | 2% | 8% | 57% | 31% |
| Other *(please specify)* | 2% | 6% | 2% | 7% |

10% open responses

11. (a) Which of the following describe how your tasks are planned? *(Tick all that apply)*

| | |
|---|---|
| I meet with the teacher(s) regularly without pupils present | 25% |
| I meet with the teacher(s) occasionally without pupils present | 35% |
| We liaise informally at breaks etc. | 53% |
| There is a diary/notebook in which my tasks are listed | 50% |
| The teacher(s) assign me tasks when I arrive at the class | 84% |
| The HT/DHT/AHT assigns me tasks around the school | 52% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 6% |

5% open responses

12. (a) Which of the following best describes your working relationship(s) with the classroom teacher(s)? *(Tick one only)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Good from the start | 63% |
| Started well and deepening with time | 28% |
| Took time to establish, but now good | 7% |
| There have been difficulties | 0% |
| Other (*Please specify*) | 0% |

1% open responses

(b) Comment further on your working relationship(s) here if you wish.

27% open responses

13. (a) Do you feel that you have enough opportunity to discuss what you are doing with the teacher(s)?

Yes 40% Some of the time 42% No 16%

(b) Please explain why

60% open responses

14. (a) Do you feel that as you become better known to the teachers they require different things from you?

Yes 78% No 19%

(b) Please explain why and note what has changed if relevant

66% open responses

15. (a) Are you happy with the balance of time you spend on different types of activity?

Yes 81% No 18%

(b) Please explain your answer

65% open responses

16. (a) Have you ever been asked to do tasks that you felt fell outside your remit?

Yes 17% No 83%

(b) Please explain briefly, identifying tasks that concern you

27% open responses

17. How would you describe how you work with pupils? *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| I work with groups | 75% | 24% | 0% |
| I work with individual pupils | 44% | 50% | 2% |
| I work round the whole class offering help where needed | 53% | 43% | 2% |
| I support pupils doing practical activities | 53% | 41% | 2% |
| I support pupils using ICT | 23% | 57% | 13% |
| I support pupils on Early Intervention | 18% | 37% | 37% |
| I supervise reinforcement games | 25% | 50% | 17% |
| I hear pupils reading | 47% | 43% | 7% |
| I support EAL pupils | 5% | 15% | 39% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 2% | 5% | 2% |

18. (a) Which of the following best describes your relationships with pupils? (*Tick one only*)

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good – I am friendly but firm | 76% |
| Developing – occasional problems, e.g. with cheeky pupils | 24% |
| I have some difficulties relating to pupils | 0% |

(b) Comment further here on relationships with pupils if you wish.

18% open responses

19. Which of the following would you say was the most important contribution you make in your school? (*Tick one only*)

| | |
|---|---|
| Freeing teachers of routine tasks (eg displays, photocopying) | 8% |
| Being an extra adult in class, freeing teachers to teach | 21% |
| Supervising pupils, in and out of class | 0% |
| Giving pupils extra support and practice | 11% |
| Being flexible and willing to support staff and pupils as needed | 57% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 3% |

3% open responses

## SUPPORT AND TRAINING

20. Which of the following in-school support and development opportunities have you had? (*Tick one box for each row*):

| | Regular | Occasional | Have not had this |
|---|---|---|---|
| Progress meetings with HT/AHT/DHT/mentor | 12% | 57% | 26% |
| Whole school planning meetings | 8% | 15% | 67% |
| In-service meetings | 24% | 35% | 31% |
| In-school development for CAs | 5% | 21% | 62% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 2% | 2% | 5% |

8% open responses

21. Which of the following external training and development opportunities have you had? *(Tick one box for each row)*:

| | Regular | Occasional | Have not had this |
|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom assistant training courses run by the authority | 30% | 35% | 26% |
| Other staff training courses run by the authority | 5% | 38% | 41% |
| Classroom assistant and teacher training run together by authority, eg on team working | 2% | 12% | 70% |
| Training related to the Professional Development Award (PDA) for CAs | 41% | 7% | 41% |
| Other college-based training | 4% | 6% | 66% |
| Other *(please specify)* | 1% | 3% | 14% |

8% open responses

22. (a) What have you found to be the most useful type of support and/or training?

76% open responses

(b) Please list any other support or training you would particularly like.

61% open responses

23. (a) If you have not had any training so far, which of the following circumstances apply? *(Tick all that apply)*

| | |
|---|---|
| I am new in post | 25% |
| Training has not been available locally | 7% |
| There is no budget to cover my training | 5% |
| Courses are in school hours and I cannot get release | 2% |
| Courses are out of hours and other commitments prevent me | 2% |

(b) Comment further here on factors which have prevented you from participating in training if you wish.

15% open responses

24. Do you have any aspirations to develop your career further in any of the following ways? *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | In the next year or two | In 3-5 years time | Not in the foreseeable future |
|---|---|---|---|
| Further training and qualifications relevant to CAs | 66% | 8% | 15% |
| Nursery nurse training | 3% | 2% | 53% |
| Teacher training (primary/nursery) | 8% | 16% | 45% |
| Teacher training (secondary) | 0% | 1% | 62% |
| Learning support training | 15% | 15% | 37% |
| I intend to develop my career in another field | 3% | 4% | 57% |
| Other (*please specify)* | 2% | 0% | 10% |

3% open responses

25. Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following: *(Tick one box for each row)*:

| | Very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Not very satisfied | Not at all satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| the job | 78% | 20% | 2% | 0% |
| the hours | 70% | 26% | 5% | 0% |
| the salary | 10% | 28% | 34% | 28% |
| conditions in the school | 66% | 31% | 2% | 0% |

## IN CONCLUSION

26. (a) Please use this space to note any current concerns or other comments you have about being a classroom assistant.

48% open responses

**Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.**

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided
to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR
by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

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# ANNOTATED

## Questionnaire for CLASSROOM TEACHERS

## National Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

## Postal Survey 2001

118 returns
(Percentages are of total number of respondents.
Please note that the number of positive responses to Q5 was 108.)

This questionnaire is the second in a research project to find out about the impact of the Classroom Assistants Initiative introduced by the Government in 1999. In this second survey we are particularly interested in any changes being made in the ways classroom assistants are used as their role becomes established in schools. Whether you participated in the survey last year or not, we do hope you will help us by completing this questionnaire: the views of classroom teachers are very important in this project.

Please tick the boxes as indicated and add brief comments where appropriate. Your responses will be treated in confidence.

Thank you.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact Ursula Schlapp or Julia Davidson at SCRE on 0131 557 2944

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

## YOU

1. Are you: Female? 98% Male? 1%

2. How many years have you been teaching?

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 years | 3% |
| 3-5 years | 9% |
| 6-10 years | 17% |
| 11-20 years | 32% |
| More than 20 years | 36% |

3. Please indicate which stage your class is this session.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | 17% | P5 | 11% |
| P2 | 13% | P6 | 14% |
| P3 | 10% | P7 | 12% |
| P4 | 5% | Composite | 24% |

*(Please note stages)* ____________ →

| Stages of composite classes | CA% |
|---|---|
| 1/2 | 6% |
| 1/3 | 1% |
| 1/4 | 2% |
| 2/3 | 6% |
| 3/4 | 2% |
| 4/5 | 1% |
| 5/6 | 3% |
| 5/7 | 3% |
| 6/7 | 1% |

4. Which of the following best describes your position in the school?

| | |
|---|---|
| Class teacher | 72% |
| Senior teacher | 22% |
| Assistant headteacher | 2% |
| Depute headteacher | 2% |
| Headteacher | |

5. Do any classroom assistants work with you and your class?

Yes 92% No 6%

## WORKING WITH CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

6. How long have you been working with:

| | Just this term | Since last session (2000/2001) | Since before August 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| your present classroom assistant? | 36% | 25% | 25% |
| any classroom assistants? | 5% | 20% | 33% |

7. How long has your present classroom assistant:

| | Just this term | Since last session (2000/2001) | Since before August 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| been in the job? | 16% | 25% | 46% |
| been in the school (in any post)? | 8% | 9% | 41% |

8. Please indicate the weekly time the classroom assistant spends in your class this session:

| | |
|---|---|
| Less than 1 hour | 7% |
| 1-5 hours | 39% |
| 6-10 hours | 25% |
| 11-15 hours | 12% |
| 16-20 hours | 3% |
| 21-25 hours | 4% |
| More than 25 hours | 3% |

9. (a) Do you feel that the amount of time you have with the classroom assistant this session is:

About right? 52% Not long enough? 36% More than enough? 3%

(b) Please explain your answer.

76% open responses

10. Does your classroom assistant also work with other classes at present?

Yes 84% No 9%

11. (a) Which of the following best describes your working relationship with the classroom assistant? *(Tick one only)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Good from the start | 67% |
| Started well and deepening with time | 19% |
| Took time to establish, but now good | 3% |
| There have been difficulties | 2% |
| Other *(Please specify)* | 1% |

(b) Comment further on your working relationship here if you wish.

31% open responses

## PLANNING/LIAISON WITH CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

12. Which of the following describe when you and the classroom assistant find opportunities to plan and liaise? *(Tick all that apply)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Before or after school in paid time | 31% |
| While pupils are at assembly | 11% |
| During school, class cover provided | 3% |
| Before or after school in own time | 34% |
| In breaks or lunchtimes | 37% |
| Only in class, with pupils present | 42% |
| Other *(please specify)* ↘ | 5% |

8% open responses

13. (a) Do you feel you have enough opportunity to discuss with classroom assistants what they do?

Yes 36% No 58%

(b) Please explain your answer.

70% open responses

14. (a) Is the classroom assistant ever not available for, or withdrawn from, your allocated sessions because of other duties within school?

No 20% Occasionally 66% Frequently 7%

(b) If so, does this affect the kinds of tasks you give to your classroom assistant?

Yes 20% No 58%

(c) Please explain your answer.

56% open responses

15. (a) Have there been any changes to the way in which you plan/liaise with classroom assistants over time?

Yes 36% No 55%

(b) Please explain briefly any changes that have been made and why.

38% open responses

16. If you have any unresolved concerns relating to planning/liaison with classroom assistants, please comment here.

15% open responses

## WHAT THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT DOES

17. How much of the time allocated to you does the classroom assistant spend on each of the following: (*Tick one box in each row*)

| | Most of the time | About half of the time | A little time | No time |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| supporting pupils' learning (e.g. practical activities, keep on task) | 54% | 26% | 10% | 2% |
| supporting teachers on routine tasks (e.g. photocopying, displays, resources) | 11% | 22% | 57% | 3% |
| socio-emotional and practical support (e.g. in class, cloakroom, on trips) | 5% | 4% | 72% | 3% |
| other (*please specify*) | 0% | 1% | 7% | 3% |

9% open responses

18. (a) Have there been any changes in the way you use CA time this session as compared with last?

| Yes, substantial changes | Yes, minor changes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 14% | 25% | 46% |

(b) Please explain briefly, noting changes and why made where appropriate.

42% open responses

19. How would you describe how the classroom assistant works when supporting learning? (*Tick one box in each row*)

| | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| S/he works with groups | 47% | 44% | 1% |
| S/he works with individual pupils | 19% | 70% | 4% |
| S/he works round the whole class offering help where needed | 8% | 73% | 9% |
| S/he supports pupils doing practical activities | 28% | 63% | 1% |
| S/he supports pupils using ICT | 6% | 71% | 13% |
| S/he supports pupils on Early Intervention | 13% | 29% | 33% |
| S/he supervises reinforcement games | 7% | 70% | 11% |
| S/he hears pupils reading | 11% | 52% | 24% |
| S/he supports EAL pupils | 3% | 25% | 36% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 2% | 3% | 2% |

7% open responses

20. (a) Have there been any difficulties with defining the role or remit of the classroom assistant(s) in your school?

| Yes, and there are still some issues | Yes, but we have resolved these now | No |
|---|---|---|
| 15% | 20% | 56% |

(b) Please give brief details of difficulties and solutions.

31% open responses

## IMPACT OF THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

21. To what extent do you agree that the following are true when you have a classroom assistant in your class? (*Tick one box for each row*)

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I expect more from pupils | 10% | 48% | 25% | 6% |
| I have increased enthusiasm for teaching | 8% | 36% | 36% | 7% |
| I do more teaching of individual pupils | 11% | 47% | 26% | 4% |
| I do more group teaching | 13% | 47% | 24% | 5% |
| I do more whole-class teaching | 4% | 12% | 53% | 9% |
| I teach in the same way as before I had a classroom assistant | 9% | 31% | 42% | 5% |
| My workload has significantly increased | 1% | 4% | 64% | 21% |
| I spend more time assessing attainment | 3% | 37% | 42% | 4% |
| The pupils experience more practical activities | 17% | 59% | 16% | 1% |
| The pupils experience more adult/child interaction | 32% | 55% | 5% | 5% |
| The pupils spend more time on task | 16% | 59% | 15% | 3% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

22. Which of the following best describes the most important impact of the classroom assistant on your use of time? (*Please tick one only*)

| | |
|---|---|
| I spend more time teaching when the classroom assistant is supporting me | 6% |
| I am able to spend 'quality' teaching time with groups and individuals | 52% |
| My time has not changed, but the pupils get more support | 26% |
| I spend as much or more time organising the classroom assistant as I gain | 1% |
| Other (*Please specify*) | 1% |

4% open responses

23. (a) Which of the following best describes your classroom assistant's relationships with pupils? *(Please tick one only)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good – friendly but firm | 74% |
| Developing – occasional problems e.g. with cheeky pupils | 20% |
| The classroom assistant has difficulty relating to pupils | 0% |

(b) Comment further here if you wish.

14% open responses

24. To what extent do you think the classroom assistants initiative is affecting pupils'... *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | Great improvement | Some improvement | No change | It is now worse |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| behaviour? | 6% | 46% | 41% | 1% |
| motivation? | 14% | 59% | 20% | 1% |
| participation in activities? | 25% | 65% | 3% | 7% |
| range of learning experiences? | 20% | 57% | 15% | 8% |
| other *(please specify)* | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

3% open responses

25. How far do you agree with the following statements about the impact of classroom assistants on pupil attainment?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| They are already making a noticeable difference for some pupils | 20% | 55% | 13% | 12% |
| I'm confident that they will have an impact once established | 24% | 51% | 8% | 0% |
| It is not possible to distinguish the impact of classroom assistants from that of other initiatives | 0% | 14% | 59% | 11% |
| The impact is indirect, as a result of freeing teacher time | 4% | 36% | 35% | 2% |
| Classroom assistants support teachers but do not affect pupil attainment | 4% | 12% | 52% | 13% |

26. (a) How satisfied are you overall with the impact of the classroom assistants initiative on:

| | Very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Not very satisfied | Not at all satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| your own workload and time for teaching? | 44% | 42% | 7% | 2% |
| the learning experiences of pupils? | 45% | 44% | 4% | 0% |

(b) Please comment further if you wish

23% open responses

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

27. (a) Have you received any training/support/guidance for class teachers in connection with the Classroom Assistants Initiative, since October 2000?

Yes 26% No 67% *(Go on to Q27)*

(b)If YES, please give brief details.

26% open responses

(c) How useful did you find this support?

Very 10% Somewhat 14% Not very 2% Not at all 0%

28. Please note any training/support/guidance you would like to see offered in the future:

(a) for yourself.

25% open responses

(b) for your classroom assistant.

32% open responses

## IN CONCLUSION

29. Please note below any current concerns or other comments you have about the classroom assistants initiative.

46% open responses

**Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.**

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided**
**to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR**
**by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

☐☐☐

SCRE
The Scottish Council for Research in Education

# ANNOTATED

# Questionnaire for HEADTEACHERS

## National Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

## Postal Survey 2001

74 returns
(Percentages are of total number of respondents.
Please note that the number of positive responses to Q5 was 61.)

This questionnaire is the second in a research project to find out about the impact of the Classroom Assistants Initiative introduced by the Government in 1999. In this second survey we are particularly interested in any changes being made in the ways classroom assistants are used as their role becomes established in schools. We have again included some headteachers who do not have classroom assistants in their schools, to capture their views as well.

We do hope you will help us by completing this questionnaire: the views of headteachers are very important in this project. Please tick the boxes as indicated and add brief comments where appropriate. Your responses will be treated in confidence.

Thank you

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact Ursula Schlapp or Julia Davidson at SCRE on 0131 557 2944

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

## YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL

1. Which of the following best describes your position:

| | |
|---|---|
| Headteacher | 93% |
| Deputy headteacher | 7% |
| Assistant headteacher | |
| Acting headteacher | |
| Other (please specify) | |

2. Do you have a class-teaching responsibility this session?

Yes 31% No 69%

If YES, please indicate what weekly hours this takes →

| Hours | HT% |
|---|---|
| 1-5 | 10 |
| 6-10 | 1 |
| 11-15 | 8 |
| 16-20 | 8 |
| 20-25 | 4 |

3. What is your school roll this session (P1-P7)? →

| Roll | HT% |
|---|---|
| 1-99 | 20 |
| 100-199 | 25 |
| 200-299 | 15 |
| 300-399 | 14 |
| 400-499 | 13 |
| >500 | 7 |

4. How many primary classes does your school have this session? →

| No. of classes | HT% |
|---|---|
| 1-9 | 54% |
| 10-19 | 39% |
| 20-29 | 7% |

5. Does your school have any classroom assistants funded by the national initiative this session?

Yes 82% →

No 18%

| No. of CAs | HT% |
|---|---|
| 1 | 27 |
| 2 | 23 |
| 3 | 14 |
| 4 | 7 |
| 5 | 10 |
| 6 | 1 |
| 7 | 1 |

6. (a) Have you funded any classroom assistant time from school resources?

Yes 7% No 93%

(b) If YES, please describe briefly your reasons for this and their main role in the school.

8% open responses

(c) What support and/or training are school-funded classroom assistants offered?

22% open responses

**If you have no 'national' classroom assistants please go to Q24 on the back page, otherwise please continue to Q7 overleaf**

## TURNOVER AND NEW POSTS

7. (a) Have any classroom assistants left their posts since August 2000?

Yes 15% No 73%

(b) If YES, please explain briefly their reasons for leaving:

15% open responses

8. (a) Have you been allocated any additional classroom assistant time from the national initiative since August 2000?

Yes 57% No 34%

(b) If YES, please give the number of people appointed
new person, full-time?
new person, part-time
extended the hours of existing classroom assistant
other *(please specify)*

5% open responses

| Appointees | No. | HT% |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 31 |
| | 2 | 15 |
| | 3 | 5 |
| New | 4 | 1 |
| New p-t | 1 | 12 |
| Extend hrs | 2 | 1 |
| Other | 1 | 3 |

9. (a) If you have appointed any classroom assistants since August 2000, did you experience any difficulties in recruiting a suitable person?

Yes 10% No 55%

(b) Please give brief details.

23% open responses

10. Which of the following best describes the previous background/experience of any new classroom assistants in your school? *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | In your school | Elsewhere |
|---|---|---|
| parent with primary age children | 23% | 19 % |
| actively involved parent (eg volunteer, PTA etc) | 19% | 14% |
| SEN auxiliary | 24% | 12% |
| playground/lunchtime supervisor | 7% | 3% |
| pre-school worker/volunteer | 4% | 5% |
| youth worker/helper | | 7% |
| no previous experience with young children/schools | | 1% |
| other *(please specify)* | 5% | 5% |

## CLASSROOM ASSISTANT TIME

11. (a) Do you feel that the amount of classroom assistant support allocated to your school is:

About right? 31% Not enough? 57% More than enough? 0%

(b) Please explain your answer briefly.

74% open responses

12. (a) Have you made any changes to the way classroom assistant time is allocated across the school this session?

Yes 61% No 26%

(b) If YES, who was involved in decisions about these changes? *(Tick all that apply)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Headteacher | 50% |
| Senior Management Team | 43% |
| Teaching staff | 46% |
| Classroom assistants | 42% |
| Other *(please specify)* | 3% |

(c) Please note briefly what and why you have changed:

64% open responses

13. Please indicate how important you felt it was to allocate the classroom assistant(s) to the following this session. *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | very important | somewhat important | not very important |
|---|---|---|---|
| all classes to give a share of support to all staff | 43% | 26% | 15% |
| the largest classes | 18% | 42% | 19% |
| early stages classes | 53% | 27% | 4% |
| classes where you feel classroom assistant support will have an impact on ethos or behaviour | 49% | 32% | 5% |
| classes where you feel classroom assistant support will have an impact on pupil attainment | 54% | 24% | 7% |
| classes where there are pupils or groups with particular needs | 61% | 20% | 4% |
| classes where a classroom assistant's specific skills may be put to best use | 38% | 34% | 8% |
| other *(please specify)* → 12% open responses | 3% | 5% | 0% |

14. (a) How much time do(es) your classroom assistant(s) spend each week on the following:

| | Most of the time | Regular blocks of time | A little time | No time |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| supporting pupils' learning (e.g. practical activities, keep on task) | 39% | 49% | 1% | 0% |
| supporting teachers on routine tasks (e.g. photocopying, displays, resources) | 3% | 50% | 32% | 3% |
| planning and liaising with teachers (without pupils present) | 0% | 15% | 54% | 14% |
| playground supervision | 0% | 41% | 26% | 19% |
| socio-emotional and practical support (e.g. in class, in cloakroom, on trips) | 1% | 15% | 66% | 4% |
| specific responsibility (e.g. resource area, ICT support) | 3% | 20% | 42% | 19% |
| other school duties (e.g. first aid, general administration) | 0% | 11% | 42% | 31% |
| other (*please specify*) | 1% | 4% | 4% | 0% |

10% open responses

(b) Please comment briefly on any variations in the way your classroom assistant(s) work(s), for example between the lower and upper ends of the school or according to particular strengths or qualifications.

47% open responses

## MANAGING AND SUPPORTING THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

15. (a) Have there been any difficulties concerning the allocation of CA time to different classes and other tasks across the school?

| Yes, and there are still some issues | Yes, but we have resolved these now | No |
|---|---|---|
| 15% | 8% | 66% |

(b) Please give brief details of difficulties and solutions.

27% open responses

16. (a) Have there been any difficulties with defining the role or remit of the classroom assistant(s) in your school?

| Yes, and there are still some issues | Yes, but we have resolved these now | No |
|---|---|---|
| 7% | 7% | 74% |

(b) Please give brief details of difficulties and solutions.

22% open responses

17. (a) How often does someone from the Senior Management Team meet with the classroom assistant(s) to monitor the role and resolve any problems?

Monthly 14% Termly 18% As needed 42% Never 0%

(b) Please comment briefly on any issues that have been raised at these meetings.

49% open responses

18. (a) Do(es) your classroom assistant(s) participate in whole-school meetings, for example, in PAT time and on in-service days?

Always 10% Whenever relevant 55% Occasionally 14% Never 10%

(b) Please note briefly any difficulties (and solutions you have found) to including classroom assistants in such meetings.

31% open responses

19. (a) Do(es) your classroom assistant(s) attend any external support or training?

Yes, regularly 43% Yes, occasionally 27% Not so far 14%

(b) If YES, please indicate which of the following apply. (*Tick one box for each row*)

| *Classroom assistant training:* | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| takes place during school hours | 51% | 16% | 0% |
| takes place in the assistant's own time | 12% | 19% | 23% |
| is funded by the authority | 63% | 5% | 1% |
| is funded by the school | 7% | 28% | 22% |
| is paid for by the assistant | 1% | 7% | 38% |
| involves courses specific to classroom assistants | 51% | 22% | 0% |
| involves courses targeting a wider audience | 3% | 31% | 11% |
| involves certificated courses | 34% | 23% | 7% |
| Other (*please specify*) | 0% | 1% | 0% |

8% open responses

## IMPACT OF THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

20. To what extent do you think the classroom assistants initiative is affecting pupils'...
*(Tick one box for each row)*

| | Great improvement | Some improvement | No change | It is now worse |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| behaviour? | 15% | 54% | 14% | 0% |
| motivation? | 23% | 55% | 7% | 0% |
| participation in activities? | 41% | 38% | 5% | 0% |
| range of learning experiences? | 30% | 46% | 7% | 0% |
| other *(Please specify)* | 4% | 1% | 0% | 0% |

10% open responses

21. (a) Which of the following best describe the relationship(s) of your classroom assistant(s) with the pupils?

| | No. of CAs (HT%) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** |
| Very good – friendly but firm | 31 | 26 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 1 | – |
| Developing – occasional problems eg with cheeky pupils | 12 | 11 | 3 | 3 | – | – | – |
| The classroom assistant has difficulty relating to pupils | 3 | – | – | – | – | – | – |

(b) Please comment further if you wish.

5% open responses

22. Which of the following would you say was the most important contribution the classroom assistant(s) make(s) in your school? *(Tick one only)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Freeing teachers of routine tasks (eg displays, photocopying) | 5% |
| Being an extra adult in class, freeing teachers to teach | 34% |
| Supervising pupils, in and out of class | 1% |
| Giving pupils extra support and practice | 7% |
| Being flexible and willing to support staff and pupils as needed | 35% |
| Other *(please specify)* | 7% |

5% open responses

23. (a) How satisfied are you overall with the impact of the classroom assistant initiative on? *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | Very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Not very satisfied | Not at all satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| teachers' workload and time for teaching? | 51% | 35% | 1% | 0% |
| the learning experiences of pupils? | 51% | 30% | 1% | 0% |

(b) Please comment further if you wish.

26% open responses

## ATTAINMENT

24. How far do you agree with the following statements about the impact of classroom assistants on pupil attainment?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| They are already making a noticeable difference for some pupils | 34% | 45% | 7% | 0% |
| I'm confident that they will have an impact once established | 34% | 31% | 4% | 0% |
| It is not possible to distinguish the impact of classroom assistants from that of other initiatives | 3% | 19% | 51% | 8% |
| The impact is indirect, as a result of freeing teacher time | 5% | 39% | 31% | 1% |
| Classroom assistants support teachers but do not affect pupil attainment | 0% | 14% | 49% | 19% |

25. (a) Did your school meet the attainment targets set for June 2001?

| | Exceeded | Met | Almost met | Did not meet |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mathematics | 34% | 27% | 22% | 10% |
| Reading | 41% | 30% | 12% | 8% |
| Writing | 37% | 23% | 22% | 10% |

(b) Please indicate what you consider to be the most important factor(s) influencing attainment in your school in the period 1998 to 2001.

84% open responses

*We would be very grateful if you would enclose a summary of your target data when you return this questionnaire.*

## IN CONCLUSION

26. Please note below any current concerns or other comments you have about the classroom assistants initiative.

60% open responses

**Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.**

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided**
**to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR**
**by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

☐☐☐

# ANNOTATED

## Questionnaire for EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

## National Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

## Postal Survey 2001

29 returns
(includes an additional 3 email replies to certain questions that are asterisked)
(Percentages are of total number of respondents
Number of respondents is given in brackets)

This questionnaire is the second in a research project to find out about the impact of the Classroom Assistants Initiative introduced by the Government in 1999 as one strand of the Excellence Fund. In this second survey we are particularly interested in any changes being made as the classroom assistants become established in schools.

If you feel that someone other than the person to whom we addressed this questionnaire is better able to complete some or all of the questions, please pass it on. It would be most helpful if whoever does complete the questionnaire could fill in the details below, so that we know whom to contact if we have further queries as the evaluation progresses.

Thank you.

Name: ______________________

Position: ______________________

Address: ______________________

______________________

Tel: ____________ Fax: ____________

Email: ______________________

Please complete the questionnaire by ticking the boxes as indicated and adding brief comments where appropriate. If you have any questions about it, please contact Ursula Schlapp or Julia Davidson at SCRE on 0131 557 2944

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

## NUMBER OF CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

1. How many new classroom assistants posts have you created since August 2000?

FTE posts 2607.3* Number of appointees 2275*

2. How many classroom assistants do you now have in total in your authority?

FTE posts 3937.45* Number of assistants 4408*

3. What is a standard FTE week for classroom assistants in your authority?

Full week = ________ hours

| Hours | EA% |
|---|---|
| 13.75 | 3 (1) |
| 25.00 | 48 (14) |
| 27.50 | 41 (12) |
| 35.92 | 1 (1) |
| 37.50 | 1 (1) |

4. (a) How many classroom assistants work:

full time? 3234*

part time? 1067*

(b) How many of the part-time assistants work 5 hours or less per week?

| No. of CAs | EA% |
|---|---|
| 1 | 4 (1) |
| 9 | 4 (1) |
| 13 | 4 (1) |
| 21 | 4 (1) |

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

5. Our previous survey indicated that advertisements in the local press and information directly from the school were the most successful in attracting suitable applicants.

(a) Did you find this to be the case in your authority:

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| in the most recent round of recruitment? | 86% (25) | 3% (1) |
| in earlier rounds of recruitment? | 96% (28) | 3% (1) |

(b) Please note any other successful recruitment approaches in your authority.

34% (10) open responses

6. (a) Was the number of applicants for posts in the most recent round of recruitment:

| More than in earlier rounds? | About the same as in earlier rounds? | Less than in earlier rounds? |
|---|---|---|
| 10% (3) | 41% (12) | 31% (9) |

(b) Did you have sufficient suitable applicants to offer a good choice of candidates to appointing panels?

Yes 86% (25) No 7% (2)

Comment further here on numbers and suitability of applicants if you wish.
83% (24) open comments

7. (a) Did you make any changes to the minimum requirements or person specifications for applicants in the most recent round of recruitment?

Yes 14% (4) No 83% (24)

(b) Please give brief details

14% (4) open responses

8. (a) Did you have applications from members of any of the following groups? *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | Yes | No | Don't know | Number appointed, EA% | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| New Deal applicants | 38% (11) | 3% (1) | 41% (12) | 10% (3) | 7% (2) | 7% (2) | – | – |
| Males | 79% (23) | 3% (1) | 10% (3) | 28% (8) | 14% (4) | 10% (3) | 7% (2) | – |
| Ethnic minorities | 41% (12) | 14% (4) | 34% (10) | 14% (4) | 7% (2) | 3% (1) | – | – |
| Disabled | 52% (15) | 14% (4) | 24% (7) | 17% (5) | 10% (3) | 3% (1) | 3% (1) | – |
| Other 'minority' *(please specify)* | 3% (1) | 10% (3) | 10% (3) | 3% (1) | – | – | – | – |

(b) Please comment briefly on any particular efforts you made to recruit members of the above groups, or any difficulties you have experienced in recruiting them.

59% (17) open responses

9. (a) Do you think the large-scale recruitment of classroom assistants has led to any problems with the supply of suitable candidates for the following positions? *(Tick one box for each row)*

| | Yes | No | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nursery assistants | 17% (5) | 72% (21) | 7% (2) |
| SEN auxiliaries | 45% (14) | 52% (15) | 3% (1) |
| Other support posts *(please specify)* | 10% (3) | 41% (12) | 7% (2) |

7% (2) open responses

(b) Please explain further if you wish

48% (14) open responses

10. (a) Did any classroom assistants resign during the session 2000/2001?

Yes 93% (27) No 0%

(b) If YES, please tell us how many and anything you know of why they left and what they are doing now.

97% (28) open responses

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

11. Do you offer permanent contracts to any of your classroom assistants? *(Tick one only)*

| | |
|---|---|
| No | 17% (5) |
| Yes, posts are permanent from the start | 72% (21) |
| Yes, when they have demonstrated their abilities in post | |
| Yes, when they have achieved certain qualifications<br>*Please specify* ______________________________ | |
| Yes, other *(please specify)* | 7% (2) |

12. (a) Have you made any changes to the terms and conditions of classroom assistants in the course of the initiative?

Yes 21% (6) No 76% (22)

(b) Please give brief details.

21% (6) open responses

13. What is the current hourly rate paid to classroom assistants in your authority?

See separate table

## DEPLOYMENT

14. (a) How important were the following in your decisions about which schools received additional classroom assistant support in the most recent round of recruitment? *(Tick one box in each row)*

| | Very important | Somewhat important | Not very important |
|---|---|---|---|
| A share to all schools | 31% (9) | 31% (9) | 17% (5) |
| School roll | 45% (13) | 28% (8) | 3% (1) |
| **Teacher**:pupil ratio | 24% (7) | 38% (11) | 10% (3) |
| **Adult**:pupil ratio | 41% (12) | 21% (6) | 10% (3) |
| Small schools with teaching head teachers | 24% (7) | 28% (8) | 17% (5) |
| Schools with large composite classes | 17% (5) | 28% (8) | 17% (5) |
| Schools with special educational needs | 10% (3) | 28% (8) | 24% (7) |
| Schools with many socio-economically disadvantaged pupils | 45% (13) | 21% (6) | 10% (3) |
| Performance on literacy/numeracy tests | 10% (3) | 14% (4) | 41% (12) |
| Other *(please specify)* | 7% (2) | 3% (1) | 3% (1) |

17% (5) open responses

(b) Please comment here on any changes you have made to your criteria for allocating classroom assistants in the course of the initiative.

45% (13) open responses

15. (a) How much guidance do you give schools about the following approaches to deployment of classroom assistants within the school? (*Tick one box in each row*)

| | Give recommendation | Give suggestions | Leave it to schools |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maximum number of classes CA works with | 28% (8) | 24% (7) | 41% (12) |
| Balance of time with pupils and on administration and other duties | 21% (6) | 31% (9) | 41% (12) |
| Inclusion of playground supervision | 38% (11) | 28% (8) | 28% (8) |
| Which stages should receive CA support | 17% (5) | 17% (5) | 52% (15) |
| Support for early literacy and numeracy | 24% (7) | 24% (7) | 38% (11) |
| Support for personal and social development | 17% (5) | 21% (6) | 48% (14) |
| Support for special educational needs | 28% (8) | 34% (10) | 24% (7) |
| Support for ICT | 14% (4) | 31% (9) | 45% (13) |
| Other (*please specify*) | 4% (1) | 0% | 4% (1) |

(b) Please give further details if appropriate.

24% (7) open responses

16. (a) Are there any primary schools in your authority with no classroom assistants as at August 2001?

Yes 24% (7) How many? →

No 72% (21)

| No. of schools | E |
|---|---|
| 6 | 3.6% |
| 16 | 3.6% |
| 19 | 3.6% |
| 27 | 3.6% |
| 30 | 3.6% |

(b) If YES, please explain briefly why these schools do not have assistants.

21% (6) open responses

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

17. (a) Have you made any changes to the induction training offered to new classroom assistants for the most recent round of recruitment?

Yes 41% (12) No 48% (14)

(b) Please give brief details.

48% (14) open responses

18. Which of the following types of ongoing training are currently offered to classroom assistants in your authority? *(Tick one box in each row)*

| | Offered to all | Limited places | Not offered |
|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom assistant training courses run by the authority | 72% (21) | 10% (3) | 0% |
| Other staff training courses run by the authority | 62% (18) | 28% (8) | 0% |
| Training related to the Professional Development Award for CAs | 52% (15) | 28% (8) | 14% (4) |
| Other college-based training (e.g. SVQ units in childcare) | 7% (2) | 14% (4) | 38% (11) |
| Other *(please specify)* | 3% (1) | 3% (1) | 7% (2) |

17% (5) open responses

19. (a) Have you provided support or training concerning working with classroom assistants to the following in the past year?

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Headteachers | 31% (9) | 62% (18) |
| Class teachers | 45% (13) | 48% (14) |
| Other staff *(please specify)* | 3% (1) | 45% (13) |

(b) Please give brief details.

59% (17) open responses

## IMPACT OF THE INITIATIVE

20. To what extent do you think that the classroom assistants initiative is affecting pupils'... *(Tick one box in each row)*

| | Great improvement | Some improvement | No change | It is now worse |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| behaviour? | 14% (4) | 76% (22) | 3% (1) | 0% |
| motivation? | 24% (7) | 62% (18) | 3% (1) | 0% |
| participation in activities? | 28% (8) | 66% (19) | 0% | 0% |
| range of learning experiences? | 24% (7) | 59% (17) | 10% (3) | 0% |
| other *(Please specify)* | 0% | 3% (1) | 0% | 0% |

Please use this space to explain any of the above if you wish.

28% (8) open responses

21. How far do you agree with the following statements about the impact of classroom assistants on pupil attainment? (*Tick one box in each row)*

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| They are already making a noticeable difference for some pupils | 41% (12) | 45% (13) | 3% (1) | 3% (1) |
| I'm confident that they will have an impact once established | 41% (12) | 45% (13) | 3% (1) | 0% |
| It is not possible to distinguish the impact of classroom assistants from that of other initiatives | 3% (1) | 24% (7) | 59% (17) | 7% (2) |
| The impact is indirect, as a result of freeing teacher time | 0% | 52% (15) | 34% (10) | 3% (1) |
| Classroom assistants support teachers but do not affect pupil attainment | 0% | 10% (3) | 62% (18) | 14% (4) |

22. Which of the following would you say was the most important contribution the classroom assistants make in your schools? (*Tick one only)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Freeing teachers of routine tasks (e.g. displays, photocopying) | 14% (4) |
| Being an extra adult in class, freeing teachers to teach | 31% (9) |
| Supervising pupils, in and out of class | 0% |
| Giving pupils extra support and practice | 6% (2) |
| Being flexible and willing to support staff and pupils as needed | 41% (12) |
| Other (*please specify)* | 0% |

7% (2) open responses

23. (a) How satisfied are you overall with the impact of the classroom assistants initiative on:

| | Very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Not very satisfied | Not at all satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| teachers' workload and time for teaching? | 62% (18) | 31% (9) | 3% (1) | 0% |
| the learning experiences of pupils? | 66% (19) | 31% (9) | 3% (1) | 0% |

(b) Please comment further if you wish.

14% (4) open responses

## ATTAINMENT

24. (a) Which of the following best describes the performance of your primary schools against the targets set for June 2001?

| Majority of targets met or exceeded | Many targets met | Some targets met, others not | Few targets met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38% (11) | 38% (11) | 14% (4) | 0% |

(b) Please comment in more detail if you wish, or send summary information if you have it available.

7% (2) open responses

25. Please indicate below what you consider to be the most important factor(s) influencing attainment in your primary schools over the period 1998 to 2001.

8% (23) open responses

## IN CONCLUSION

26. Please note below any concerns you have now about the classroom assistants initiative.

45% (13) open responses

27. Any other comment?

28% (8) open responses

**Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.**

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope to the classroom assistants research team at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 21 September, or as soon as possible.**

# Appendix 5: The case study schools

**School A**

| | |
|---|---|
| Location: | semi-urban area |
| School roll: | 230 pupils |
| Classroom support: | 1 Classroom Assistant<br>1 Nursery Nurse |

### *Role in class*

The classroom assistant played a key role in supporting practical work, especially in mathematics. She prepared resources for projects mainly at the beginning of each term. In addition, her repertoire of skills for encouraging positive behaviour was extended during the year. For instance, she spent more time with a supply teacher getting to know a class. The classroom assistant clearly articulated the complexity of this situation:

> *Class behaviour is affected by whichever teacher is at the front. The class can turn it on. When a supply teacher comes in it is negative. I get all the back chat. I help her with their name. They might not do it once they realise I know their groups and whose behaviour to watch.*

The headteacher indicated that the classroom assistant's role had recently been extended:

> *Alongside her work in the playground she now does the games for the Active Primary School Project. She works with the male teacher from the secondary and she can take it on with the class teacher when he is not there.*

During the second visit the P5 and 6 pupils were observed rehearsing for the Active Primary School Project in the school hall supervised by two teachers and the classroom assistant.

### *Planning and liaison*

The classroom assistant continued to demonstrate a flexible approach to planning. She explained that:

> *I am here at 8:15 and usually stay until 4:30 or perhaps 5 pm. If I haven't got enough information I would ask and I know where to go. I am often doing computer stuff after school so they know where I am.*

### *Other roles in school*

By the second visit the classroom assistant had extended her role to include taking 20 P6 pupils swimming for one afternoon per week. She also provided some additional support over lunchtime. In conjunction with the SEN auxiliary, she supervised wet lunchtimes and also monitored the school toilets. As the classroom assistant explained:

> *We have a book and we sign pupils in and we sit outside of the toilet all of the time. Only let them in at the breaks. The process of discouraging them at other times is proving successful. The pupils are learning to go at the breaks.*

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This classroom assistant also supported the development of ICT throughout the school.

### *Impact on teachers and pupils*

Staff perceived the classroom assistant to be a gatekeeper between them and pupils: her personal and social development skills were continually utilised by teachers and pupils inside and outside the classroom, eg in the playground by organising groups for games for the Active Primary School Programme, and by supporting supply teachers with difficult classes. Her impact was summarised by the headteacher:

> *She is making a difference, of more than one kind, to self-esteem. One class is very difficult, it is quite difficult. She has been very supportive with the supply teacher. Some of the teachers need extra support and she spends more time with them. She has helped, as there are less incidents now. She is sensitive about confidential issues and not undermining teachers' and pupils' confidences.*

### *Pupils' views*

A group of P5 pupils in this school lamented their limited time with the classroom assistant. They observed that:

> *Sometimes we do writing in trios. We check each others work. Sometimes Miss X (the class teacher) does it and sometimes Mrs Y (the assistant)...*
>
> *She comes and goes twice a week: she used to come in nearly 2 hours every day when we were in P1-P4. She give us clues, she explains thing when you're really stuck so that you can try to work it out for yourself.*
>
> *We really like her. She is quite friendly. It is a treat. We are getting to know her better, she is funny. She is kind and makes you more joyful if you don't enjoy your work. She makes things easier. She is always happy...never angry!*

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**School B**

Location: semi-rural area

School roll: 180

Classroom support: 1 part-time Classroom Assistant/part-time SEN auxiliary

1 part-time SEN auxiliary

### *Role in class*

The priority for the classroom assistant remained supporting infants in P1. By the second visit, with her reduced hours, she was spending less time with the P7s. The headteacher emphasised that the assistant's key classroom role was setting up and undertaking practical work with the pupils. The headteacher explained that she expected teachers to give guidance to classroom assistants on specific tasks. The head and the class teacher concurred that teachers' forward planning needed to incorporate assistants if they were to be utilised effectively. However, it was not clear to the researchers that many teachers were including assistants in their written documentation.

On a positive note, the class teacher thought that the classroom assistant was:

> *another pair of ears – children demand instant attention. You're one person in the room having to listen to 26 demands...Enrichment of the curriculum is now possible with someone else to watch over them too.*

### *Planning and liaison*

The class teacher believed that her interactions with the classroom assistant had not substantially improved because of time constraints. As she explained:

> *I don't feel able to discuss things in as much detail as I would like. Time is a killer...snatching the odd moment to explain things on the run. There is not enough time for feedback. Nothing has changed...it is easier when you say to her to do it as you did last time you did the activity...it is harder to find time to explain new activities...*

### *Other roles in school*

The classroom assistant had not extended her role and saw no possibilities as she continued to go home for lunch each day. She thought that:

> *It is an ideal job for married women with families, varied work, always something new, working with children, school hours and the holidays...*

### *Impact on pupils and teachers*

The headteacher, the class teacher and classroom assistant all agreed that the assistant's main impact has been in providing support for teachers. As the headteacher put it:

> ...[she] *makes teacher's job more manageable. Tremendous to have another pair of hands for practical work. It is enabling them to do what they know is good practice but with a larger class.*

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With regard to pupil behaviour, the headteacher saw little direct impact:

> *Nothing has changed about pupil behaviour as a result of an assistant that I can put my finger on. There are positive benefit to teachers – the community is happy about anything that helps teachers and children...Pupils accept her...Relationships are the crux of the matter. The willingness of the teachers and the relationships of the Classroom Assistant with the children..*

### *Pupils' views*

At this school the classroom assistant was observed supervising some practical work on volume and measurement with a group of P3 pupils. This was followed by various language-related activities with groups and then individual work with a boy who had reading difficulties. This was a typical pattern of activities for the classroom assistant. In their interview, the pupils were able to differentiate between the roles of teacher and classroom assistant.

> *When it's hard I ask Mrs Y (the classroom assistant). I know Mrs X is the teacher. Mrs X tells Mrs Y what to do. Mrs Y is the helper for when you're really stuck.*

### School C

| | |
|---|---|
| Location: | middle-class suburban area |
| School roll: | 326 |
| Classroom support: | 3 full-time Classroom Assistants<br>An additional one to be appointed in 2001/2 |

***Role in class***

The classroom assistant was observed working with pupils in the early stages of primary education. At the time of the first visit in November 2000, the P1 teachers operated a team-teaching system into which the classroom assistant fitted. The assistant provided added support for literacy and numeracy through a variety of reinforcement activities. Initially, she spent the first half hour of her time preparing resources, while the teacher taught the whole class. By the second visit the assistant's role had expanded to include library work. However, the reinforcement games and activities with small groups continued as before.

The assistant also provided support at other times and to other classes by supervising art activities, giving general help with writing and spelling, and generally supporting pupils and keeping them on task.

***Planning and liaison***

This classroom assistant was happy with the amount of time teachers spent preparing her for her tasks. She felt that at the beginning of the year the teacher had explained the group activities so thoroughly that she was now able to replicate these activities with other children. In addition, the teacher maintained a diary in which plans for each day were recorded.

The teachers thought that it was easier to work with a classroom assistant than with a variety of volunteer parents.This was because, having the same person on a regular basis meant they learnt where things were and what to do in recurring activities without teachers having to explain every time.

The classroom assistant worked with five teachers and classes, and by the time of the second visit she felt that she knew what they expected of her. Although she did reflect that:

> *At the start it wasn't so easy because I wasn't sure what it was they meant, so I had to clarify. But now it can just briefly be said. There's a shorthand now... I used to have my timetable and we used to write it all out, but that hasn't been used as much now, because we've got this shorthand.*

***Other roles in the school***

Each classroom assistant had responsibility for a resource area in the school, and spent one afternoon per week preparing it. The observed classroom assistant had responsibility for organising the school library and had begun computerising the catalogue. She was supported by parent volunteers. On the second visit the classroom assistant explained that the volunteer help had been insufficient which resulted in her falling behind her schedule to complete the catalogue by the end of the school year. She proposed spending more time in the library and less time supporting teachers in their classrooms.

### *Impact on teachers and pupils*

The headteacher felt that the classroom assistants made an important contribution to the ethos of the school by increasing the confidence of the pupils with whom she worked. She thought that teachers particularly valued classroom assistants who used their initiative and were very flexible.

The P1 class teacher believed that the classroom assistant had enabled groups to progress by engaging them in regular reinforcement activities. This allowed the teacher to spend more time developing other pupils in the class. She explained that:

> *I think* [Classroom Assistant] *enjoys that part, knowing what she's going to do that day. She knows what she is doing is worthwhile and she knows she's working with a group and being part of the team. But then again she is quite happy to put up the displays or laminate your work or whatever. I just try to use her as much as possible with children rather than other* [tasks].

### *Pupils' views*

Among other activities the classroom assistant was observed reinforcing analogue clock times with a group of children in P2. Comments such as: *'It's quite simple, isn't it?'* and *'That is fun! I like this.'* came from the pupils at intervals.

### School D

| | |
|---|---|
| Location: | rural area |
| School roll: | 40 pupils |
| Classroom support: | 2 part-time Classroom Assistants |

***Role in class***

The classroom assistant spent most of her time in class working with groups of pupils. She did, however, perform other tasks such as making displays and preparing materials but most often remained within the class:

> *...if* [the class teacher] *is doing a big class activity I might go away and do some of the other things like backing pictures...But a lot of the time she likes me to stay in as well so that I do hear the way she's put things to them and then they can carry it on the same.*

The class teacher and classroom assistant had a well-established way of working and we saw little change on our second visit. The classroom assistant believed that as she had gained more experience, she was now more aware of what she was doing and why. She felt ready to 'jump in and get involved more quickly'. Initially, the class teacher believed that they had 'circled round each other for a while' but that now they were almost telepathic in their ability to communicate what they needed.

***Planning and liaison***

Both found it hard to find out-of-class planning time. The classroom assistant did not arrive in school until 9.15 am which left morning break as the only time they were together without the class. The headteacher, as a teaching headteacher of a combined P4/5/6/7, was rarely able to provide them with cover. To facilitate planning, the observed classroom assistant and teacher maintained a diary. At the end of each day the teacher would plan the next day's activities, outlining them in her diary and including specific notes on what she wanted the classroom assistant to do. Further communication took place in quick comments as they worked together. While both were happy that their system was working well for them, the class teacher thought that if they had more time she would involve the classroom assistant in planning.

***Other roles in the school***

In this very small school, classroom assistants were focused exclusively on supporting the teacher and pupils within their assigned class. The observed classroom assistant had a separate role as lunchtime auxiliary, but no other responsibilities. She believed that her two roles complemented each other and allowed her to get to know the children better in two different contexts.

***Impact on teachers and pupils***

The class teacher said that with the support of the classroom assistant:

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> *there's no question about it... I am getting more contact with the children.*

She pointed out that when pupils needed help, for example with spelling:

> *there are two of us so the waiting time per child is halved.*

She also felt that there were activities the pupils could do with the classroom assistant that would not be possible without:

> *things like the game that they played. That's so valuable. I could not have been in the two places at once.*

She believed that the classroom assistant was lightening [her] load in many ways. As well as the support for pupils she was practical and quick when it came to photocopying, putting up displays and so on, all things which saved the teacher time.

***Pupils' views***

This classroom assistant demonstrated to children in a combined P1/2 class how they could use their own classroom to solve a mathematical problem.

One pupil commented:

> *This is an easy way of doing sums.*

**School E**

| | |
|---|---|
| Location: | semi-rural area |
| School roll: | 192 |
| Classroom support: | 2 (1 full-time Classroom Assistant and 1 combined Classroom Assistant/SEN auxiliary) |

***Role in class***

The observed classroom assistant perceived that her overall role had not changed between the two visits. However she identified some minor changes to her responsibilities since Easter 2001. She provided specific support to a P3 pupil with behavioural difficulties by working with him for 15 minutes at the end of each day. In addition once per week, she was responsible for supporting the Learning Support group within the class. The class teacher elaborated further on this complex staffing arrangement:

> *Every year Mrs X, the Learning Support teacher does the screening tests in reading and maths: it's an annual event for the whole school. Fuzz Buzz group don't get any support while this is happening. Mrs X leaves work for the group to do in class. However, it is good to have kids away with Mrs X as there is more peace and quiet.*

The classroom assistant's role in this school varied according to pupil stage. The teacher of P4 explained that he would like the classroom assistant to be allocated to his class for longer period because:

> *We work well together. It is helpful to have another eye to keep them on task: she can raise her eyebrows to them if necessary. We are becoming telepathic!*

Higher up the school, the assistants tended to be employed in more out-of-class activities. With the senior classes the classroom assistant's role in the library had increased: she helped P6 pupils access the Internet, returned books to the library and was computerising the library catalogue. However, teachers in the upper primary stages seemed to require more time to develop an effective working relationship. As the headteacher explained:

> *Mrs X is more of a general factotum there, not so much a teaching assistant or a group teaching resource. Staff* [are] *taking time to utilise her fully. It is not a personality thing it is just getting used to it.*

By the time of our second visit, the structured activities programme, which initially had caused the classroom assistant some anxiety, appeared to be working well. The classroom assistant described her role in this:

> *The structured activities in the afternoon with P4,5,6 and 7 are evolving quite well now. I enjoy them. I was a bit apprehensive at first because it can be very repetitive with four classes doing the same activities. I am in the open area supervising computing with the iBooks. The package we're using is Appleworks. There are pre-prepared sheets for word-processing just now. They have a reference book to work though at their own pace. It is useful when there's only five pupils so I can have a machine to demonstrate on.*

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The assistant had also learnt how to use a digital camera and planned to make a photographic record of school excursions.

### *Planning and liaison*

Although teachers liaised with the classroom assistant in a variety of ways, they relied primarily on informal chats at different times of the school day.

### *Other roles in school*

At the time of the first visit the classroom assistant already had a relatively high profile within the school community as the designated first-aider. By the second visit she had extended her role to include playground duty.

### *Impact on teachers and pupils*

In this school the assistant's main impact was achieved by supporting teachers. In addition, staff believed that she enhanced pupils' personal and social development. This was described:

From the assistant herself:

> *My important contribution is as a back-up to the teacher. Someone else there for the children to ask so that they're not sitting pondering or worrying...when the teacher is busy...*

And from the P4 class teacher:

> *I have more time to work with individuals and groups and talk to the class.*

Summing up the assistant's impact on the pupils, the headteacher noted that:

> *More co-operating – children less likely to come to another teacher. Children come to her with their problems...I think they see assistants as another resource. This gives them more confidence in their own work. They know they can ask if they need to. For personal and social matters they can ask whoever is on: it could be me, or a teacher or the assistant.*

### *Pupils' views*

At this school three boys from a lower than average ability reading group for the class reflected positively on the classroom assistant role. Again they were able to distinguish the role played by different adults:

> *Mrs A helps you. It is nice when she helps you. She knows everything. He (the class teacher) helps us too. You can ask whoever you want to. He usually takes us for reading. He is the teacher. Mrs A is just a helper.*

### School F

Location: urban area of high social deprivation
School roll: 240 pupils
Classroom support: 2 full-time Classroom Assistants (1 a Nursery Nurse)

#### *Role in class*

In the early stages classes, the classroom assistant who had a nursery nurse qualification, worked primarily with groups of children in tasks relating to Early Intervention. She explained that the timetable had to be arranged carefully to create blocks of time so that teachers got some quality time in the class, but also avoiding the presence of too many adults in any given class together. Some classes were joined by a number of other adults during the week, including the Home-Link teacher, a Learning Support teacher, and Special Needs assistants.

The classroom assistant usually supervised a group of children engaged in practical activities or reinforced literacy work. She also provided support for children working with computers. Initially, she found herself doing what she saw as an awful lot of administrative tasks, such as photocopying. Through negotiation with teachers mediated by the depute head, she had gradually reduced her involvement with administrative tasks. These were currently undertaken by a general auxiliary.

The second classroom assistant worked mainly with P4 and P5 classes. A typical in-class session for her involved moving around the classroom offering support to different pupils. She saw her role primarily as helping pupils use their imagination and express their ideas on paper. In particular she focused on children who were struggling to get started with activities set by teachers.

She regularly worked one-to-one or with a small group of pupils who needed extra help, particularly when the class engaged in mathematics or writing activities. She spent less time with able children. The teacher looked to the classroom assistant to reiterate his instructions slowly and in more depth for those children, while he set work for the rest of the class. He could then move around giving further support wherever it was needed, including those who were working with the classroom assistant. She also heard reading groups, took groups down to the school library, and supervised groups doing practical activities such as art.

#### *Planning and liaison*

Opportunities for planning existed in this school because the early years classroom assistant started work before the pupils arrived and was thus able to talk with the teacher alone. The teacher also maintained a diary containing the daily plans, which included what the classroom assistant was to do. The diary was an open document which could be used to inform students or supply teachers and in which they were free to add their comments. Despite these

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opportunities, the classroom assistant felt that there wasn't sufficient time to liaise with all the teachers she worked with:

> *It's fine, but you don't really get much preparation time or time with the teachers. That's the only thing, really. But I know – I've been working here for about 3 1/2 years now – so I know the teachers pretty well...so I know how they like things done. Every teacher does things differently so I have to, sort of, go into a different mode.*

Finding time to plan and discuss their work together was even more difficult for the classroom assistant who worked with the P4 and P5 classes because she started work later and also undertook playground supervision. The teacher described a diary system which had worked quite well but which often disappeared from the classroom. Otherwise, discussion had to be fitted wherever they could find time. The classroom assistant described some of the problems this entailed:

> *...if they are all doing a quiet job, that is usually the time we would discuss what is going on, and if they've got say music or if they are in activity with another teacher, we have time to speak then, which is really good. You do need that. You can discuss things that you couldn't actually say in front of the children in that school. There are a lot that have big ears.*

This lack of communication time inevitably led to problems and the teacher lamented occasions when he wished he had been informed sooner of events which only the classroom assistant had observed.

### *Other roles in the school*

The early years classroom assistant had few out-of-class responsibilities. She occasionally accompanied classes on school trips, and also helped the auxiliary supervise wet break times:

> *because it is an awful lot of children in a small space, and they get very high and excited. So it's good to have another adult there, just to make it fun.*

In contrast, the classroom assistant who worked with children in P4 and P5 perceived break time supervision to be an integral part of her role. On her appointment in August 2000 she had been allocated to support teachers in two particularly challenging classes. The playground input was recognised as taking her away from the classroom, but was considered necessary because of the social background of the children. The headteacher thought that, since many children did not know how to play well together, they needed supervising in the playground to prevent disputes arising which could later affect their classroom behaviour. The classroom assistant organised games such as rounders and skipping; she also monitored particular children and tried to head off trouble before it developed. She was supplied with a walkie-talkie with which she could call for back-up from more senior staff.

### *Impact on teachers and pupils*

In the early years class (a composite P1/2) the teacher identified two areas in which the classroom assistant had had an impact. First, she felt that practical activities were definitely more successful when undertaken in the company of another adult. And, secondly, certain 'individual learners' could be kept on task more when there were two adults circulating and prompting them at regular intervals. The teacher pointed out that:

> *A composite P1/2 is a very difficult class. I can't set work to one group and concentrate on another and expect them to carry on... One or two will work very conscientiously. But at the same time we have to remember how old they are.*

In the P4 class, the teacher thought that the classroom assistant's presence affected both pupils' attitudes and their attainment. She detected improvements in their attitude as a consequence of them getting more individual support and encouragement. This was particularly noticeable for certain pupils:

> *Because she can spend more time with them...she can talk through things with them and she's very patient. "Come on, read the question. Read it!" They are actually doing it. They've done half a test and we've marked half the test. And they have both passed the first half.*

### *Pupils' views*

In this school two girls from a P4 class were interviewed. One spoke more than the other, who generally just echoed her friend. They both enjoyed having the classroom assistant around to give extra help. They felt she helped them get started, maybe in a way that would help them do it alone the next time. They were also aware of getting less help when the classroom assistant was not there. One explained that:

> *She's someone in the playground to tell if there is a problem.*
>
> *She plays games with you in the playground. Find a friend for you to be with if you can't.*

These pupils thought that the best thing about having a classroom assistant was getting help when they were stuck. However, they felt it was sometimes confusing knowing whom to ask for help.

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